

Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*, 1891-92 edition.

**VIGIL STRANGE I KEPT ON THE FIELD ONE NIGHT.**

VIGIL strange I kept on the field one night;  
When you my son and my comrade dropt at my side that day,  
One look I but gave which your dear eyes return'd with a look I  
    shall never forget,  
One touch of your hand to mine O boy, reach'd up as you lay on  
    the ground,  
Then onward I sped in the battle, the even-contested battle,  
Till late in the night reliev'd to the place at last again I made my  
    way,  
Found you in death so cold dear comrade, found your body son  
    of responding kisses, (never again on earth responding,)  
Bared your face in the starlight, curious the scene, cool blew the  
    moderate night-wind,  
Long there and then in vigil I stood, dimly around me the battle-  
    field spreading,  
Vigil wondrous and vigil sweet there in the fragrant silent night,  
But not a tear fell, not even a long-drawn sigh, long, long I gazed,  
Then on the earth partially reclining sat by your side leaning my  
    chin in my hands,  
Passing sweet hours, immortal and mystic hours with you dearest  
    comrade—not a tear, not a word,  
Vigil of silence, love and death, vigil for you my son and my  
    soldier,  
As onward silently stars aloft, eastward new ones upward stole,  
Vigil final for you brave boy, (I could not save you, swift was your  
    death,  
I faithfully loved you and cared for you living, I think we shall  
    surely meet again,)  
Till at latest lingering of the night, indeed just as the dawn  
    appear'd,  
My comrade I wrapt in his blanket, envelop'd well his form,  
Folded the blanket well, tucking it carefully over head and care-  
    fully under feet,  
And there and then and bathed by the rising sun, my son in his  
    grave, in his rude-dug grave I deposited,  
Ending my vigil strange with that, vigil of night and battle-field  
    dim,  
Vigil for boy of responding kisses, (never again on earth  
    responding,)

Vigil for comrade swiftly slain, vigil I never forget, how as day  
brighten'd,  
I rose from the chill ground and folded my soldier well in his  
blanket,  
And buried him where he fell.

Walt Whitman Archive

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