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Whitman's Manuscript Draft of "Small Memoranda"

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ON THE BACK COVER

Whitman's Manuscript Draft of "Small Memoranda": As is the case with his poetry manuscripts, Whitman's prose manuscripts reveal the ceaseless energy, improvisation, and enterprise of his writing process. This manuscript fragment, from the Kendall Reed Collection, is the opening of the first of the "Small Memoranda," originally published in *November Boughs* (1888). These memoranda are presented as recovered specimens of the many that Whitman wrote during the Civil War and its aftermath—thus his subtitle for this section, "Thousands lost—here one or two preserved."

The first two memoranda deal with President Andrew Johnson's Amnesty Proclamation of May 29, 1865, which restored property rights (with the exception, of course, of property in slaves) to Confederates who took the oath of loyalty, swearing to "support and defend the Constitution of the United States and the Union of the States thereunder," as well as to "support all laws and proclamations which have been made during the existing rebellion with reference to the emancipation of slaves." Johnson's proclamation listed fourteen categories of exceptions to this general amnesty, and Confederates in all of these groups needed to make a special application for pardons. The "famous 13th exception" that Whitman refers to included "all persons who have voluntarily participated in said rebellion, and the estimated value of whose taxable property is over twenty thousand dollars." This exception caused a great deal of anxiety among wealthy Southerners, who feared that their property would be confiscated even if they had not served in the Confederate army, because the nature of the "voluntary participation" was not specified; therefore, most Southerners with property worth more than $20,000, just to be safe, applied for the pardons, overwhelming government offices. Whitman was involved in processing the applications of what he called the "swarms" of the "$20,000 men seeking pardons," who came directly to the Attorney General's office (*PW*, 2:611).

The manuscript, written on stationery of the Attorney General's Office (where Whitman began working in the summer of 1865) and dated August 22, 1865, indicates that these "small memoranda" actually were bits of prose Whitman had written on the spot, and then, in the 1880s, retrieved and organized, marking them up for the printer. These "small memoranda" were obviously a late addition to *November Boughs*—thus his note to the compositor, pasted onto the stationery along with his title, to insert it following page 104 in the proofs that had already been typeset. The text did, in fact, appear on p. 105 of *November Boughs* and can be found in *PW*, 2:610.

The manuscript fragment reads as follows:

Copy to follow page 104 in my proof page

George[or Grosse?] [not in Whitman's handwriting]
Small Memoranda [underlined three times]
~~Old and~~ Thousands lost—here one or two preserved [underlined once]

side head—SC & ital

Attorney General's Office,[printed on stationery]
Washington,[printed] Aug. 22, 18[printed] 65

As I write this, about noon, the [^]suites of [^] rooms ~~of this~~ here is filled with southerners, standing in squads, or streaming in & out, [^]some[^] talking with the Pardon Clerk, some waiting to see the Attorney General, others discussing in low tones among themselves. All are [^]mainly[^] anxious about their Pardons. The famous 13th exception of the Presidents Amnesty Proclamation of [^]leave ab't 4 or 5 cms blank[^] makes it necessary that every secessionist whose property [The manuscript is torn off here with only pieces of words visible on a small stub of the stationery. The printed copy continues "is worth $20,000 or over, shall get a special pardon, before he can transact any legal purchase, sale, &c." Still visible below the last extant line on the fragment are the "$" from "$20,000" and parts of "shall get a" and "legal purchase."]

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