Melville poetry – day 2

Civil War references

“The Armies of the Wilderness” The Battle of the Wilderness was the first battle of Lieut. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant's 1864 Virginian Overland Campaign against General Robert E. Lee and the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia. The battle lasted from May 5 – 7 1864. The battle is usually described as a draw; a better way of describing it would be as a tactical Confederate victory, but a strategic victory for the Union army. Lee inflicted heavy casualties on Grant's army, a total of 17,666 according to Army of the Potomac records. Lee, on the other hand, lost about 11,500 men and ended the battle in possession of more of the field than it held when the fighting started. But at this point in the war, that wasn't sufficient. Grant, unlike Lee's previous adversaries, refused to retreat simply because he met a check. Lee would have to destroy the Army of the Potomac while he still had sufficient force to do so, and Grant was too skilled to allow that to happen.

“The Swamp-Angel” Parrott gun: is a type of artillery invented by Robert Parker Parrott. It was created in 1860 and patented in 1861. It is marked by a reinforcing band around the breech of the weapon to give it additional strength. There were prior cannons designed this way, but the method of welding the band was the innovation. It was applied to the gun red-hot and then the gun was turned while pouring water down the muzzle allowing the band to attach uniformly. By the end of the American Civil War, both sides were using this type of gun extensively.

“In the Prison Pen” Andersonville: A notorious Confederate prison camp in Georgia where Union POWs were sent. During the 15 months during which Andersonville was operated, almost 13,000 Union prisoners died there of malnutrition, exposure, and disease; Andersonville became synonymous with the atrocities which both North and South soldiers experienced as prisoners of war.
The Crater at Petersburg: The Battle of the Crater was part of the Siege of Petersburg. Northern General Grant vs. Southern General Robert E. Lee. A mining engineer from Pennsylvania in civilian life, proposed digging a long mine shaft underneath the Confederate lines and planting an explosive charge directly underneath a fort in the middle of the Confederate First Corps line. If successful, this would not only kill all the defenders in the area, it would also open a hole in the Confederate defenses. The explosion worked and blasted a huge hole in the earth, but Northern divisions went across the field to the crater and, instead of moving around it, actually moved down into the crater itself, wasting valuable time while the Confederates, under Maj. Gen. William Mahone, gathered as many troops together as they could for a counterattack. Soon, they had formed up around the crater and began firing down into it, in what Mahone later described as a "turkey shoot".

“The March to the Sea” and “The Frenzy in the Wake” William Tecumseh Sherman (February 8, 1820 – February 14, 1891) was an American soldier, businessman, and author. He served as a general in the United States Army during the American Civil War (1861–1865), achieving both recognition for his outstanding command of military strategy and criticism for the harshness of the "scorched earth" policies he implemented in dealing with the enemy. Sherman's siege and capture of Atlanta, Georgia and the subsequent March to the Sea from Atlanta to Savannah in the autumn of 1864 sealed Sherman's position as one of the leading Union generals of the Civil War. Convinced that the Confederacy's ability to wage further war had to be definitively crushed if the fighting was to end (and that, therefore, the North had to approach the ongoing conflict as a war of conquest), Sherman's advance through Georgia and the Carolinas was accompanied by looting, brutality, and widespread destruction of civilian supplies and infrastructure. The targeting of civilians and reports of war crimes on the march have made Sherman a controversial figure, particularly in the American South, to this day.
“The Martyr” -- Abraham Lincoln was assassinated on April 15, 1865, six days after Lee surrendered to Grant at Appomattox Court House.

**other references:**

**p. 115 -- cockatrice:** mythical creature that is part bird, part serpent

**p. 140 -- Sisera:** a leader of Jabin’s army (enemy of the Israelites). Sisera is finally killed by a woman, who apparently welcomes him into her tent with hospitality and then, while he’s sleeping, drives a tent peg through his head into the earth.

**p. 157 -- sybil:** a prophetess

**p. 224 -- Pharisee:** a self-righteous or sanctimonious person; or, a member of an ancient Jewish sect noted for strict obedience to Jewish traditions