REMINISCENCES OF WALT WHITMAN

REMINISCENCES OF WALT WHITMAN

WITH

EXTRACTS FROM HIS LETTERS AND REMARKS ON HIS WRITINGS

By WILLIAM SLOANE KENNEDY

"Who loves a Man may see his image here."
— J. R. Lowell.

ALEXANDER GARDNER
Publisher to Her Majesty the Queen
PAISLEY; and 26 PATERNOSTER SQUARE, LONDON
1896

He has sipped the morning's freshest dew, and his heart-perfume is sweeter than the clover's dewy breath,
Subtler far than all the fiery fragrance prisoned in the leafy girdle of the world.

Far and fast the wild bees hum the Lover's advent, sea and forest shout their pæan,
On the rocks the lichens etch his name, and the lightnings on the sky.

When the Night, a dim-robed phantom blind and dumb, stripes the polar void with mystic cipher, 'tis for him alone;
Ay, for him alone flash the golden gear and trappings of the slowly turning crystalline-blue dome.

PREFACE.

I HAD intended to add to this volume an extensive bibliography of *Leaves of Grass* that I have prepared, forming a curious anecdotal and literary history of the book and its "varying fortune, with flight, advance and retreat, victory deferr'd and wavering," up to the point of Whitman's death and his work's triumphant success. It was the intention also to include a copy of his will, a group of unclassifiable anecdotes and items, and a full list of changes of titles of poems, for the benefit of holders of old editions. But it is thought best to reserve all this matter for a small supplementary volume. I also made, ten years ago, a pretty full concordance to *Leaves of Grass*, but the MS., together with portrait and autograph MSS. of Walt Whitman's, and the first cast of much of the present volume, was stolen from me in Europe, after receiving the benefit of suggestions from John Addington Symonds and other English friends.

Mr. Symonds was singularly unfortunate in his published utterances on the man he loved most passionately of any on earth. We here in America were astounded that it seemed to him necessary in his work on Walt Whitman to relieve the Calamus poems of the vilest of all possible interpretations. It was a sad revelation to us of the state of European morals, that even the ethical perfume of these noblest utterances on friendship could not save them from such a fate. But Symonds had the best of motives. The following extracts from two letters to me show how he distrusted his own powers in writing on

Whitman, and also suggest that if he had hit from the shoulder, and hit hard, in his rebuke of Swinburne's self-convicting slanders, he would not now have that successor of the little wasp of Twickenham besmirching his character with the mud of a libellous epithet (see Swinburne's recent *Fortnightly* article on Jowett).

Under date of August 21, 1887, Mr. Symonds wrote from Davos Platz:—

"It is enormously difficult to write on Whitman. No one has quite succeeded up to this time. This I am able to affirm from experience; for some years ago I formed large collections for a work on Whitman. I have masses of MS. by me on the subject, which I found to be so formless, so obscure, so inadequate to the man, and yet so blatant and exaggerated, that I put my work aside and acknowledged to myself its failure.

"I sent to the *Fortnightly* about ten days ago a temperate reprimand to Swinburne for his ignoble attack on Whitman."

Sept. 17.—[If you print in your book European eulogiums of Whitman] "I should like to add a few sentences expressing as plainly as I can what it is that I for one most admire in him after 22 years of intimate acquaintance with his work.

"I am afraid that his friends may have thought my rebuke to Swinburne (in the *Fortnightly* of this month) lukewarm. It was printed, or rather misprinted, without my being able to modify my utterance upon the proof. I meant to keep my tone very low, and to say far less than I feel; for I am sure that this is the right way to win a wide recognition of Whitman's merits. Yet when I saw my note in print, I felt very sorry that I had not been allowed the opportunity of striking out a phrase here and there. It does not represent my thought. It is almost impossible to say exactly anything about so astounding and incommensurable a thinker and writer as Whitman is. . . . I am, very sincerely and with comradely greetings, yours. . . . From a peak 9500 feet above sea, I saluted you and W. W. three days ago!"

Mr. Symonds died in April, 1893, a year after Whitman's decease. It is evident from a sentence in one of the foregoing

extracts that if he had not survived Whitman he would not have published more than a brief statement about his American friend.

W. S. K.

BELMONT, MASS., U.S.A.,
July 28, 1896.

TABLE OF CONTENTS.

PART I.

MEMORIES, LETTERS, ETC.

"Publish my name and hang up my picture as that of the tenderest lover."—*Leaves of Grass.*

PHILADELPHIA, November 22, 1880.—A delightful call on Walt Whitman last night. There is a kind of sweet and pathetic resignation in the tones of his voice; he seems patient and pain-chastened; has a proud but kindly, native-aristocratic temper and carriage. It appears that he has never dipped into the Greek language; said he had not. But I never knew anyone show profounder insight into the Greek *al fresco* spirit than he in the course of a few broken and hesitating sentences. (Walt Whitman's syntax is always much broken in conversation, until he warms up to his theme.) He said, "The Greeks tested everything by the open air." I can't tell how it was, but the large personality of the man so vivified the few words he spoke that all the majesty of Greece—especially her sculpturesque art-idea—seemed to loom up before me as never before in my life, although the study of Greek literature had been a specialty of my collegiate and post-collegiate years. Whitman dwelt enthusiastically on the remarkable perennial purity of the great St. Lawrence River, which he had seen during the past summer. We both thought that this translucid purity would have deep influence upon the art and the ethical natures of the peoples who are to dwell along the St. Lawrence and the chain of the Great Lakes.

February 17, 1881.—At the close of the evening Whitman spoke of the Adamitic element in his poetry, saying, "I know that other writers excel me in intellectual gifts, etc., but my contribution, that which I bring into literature for the first time, is the brawn and blood of the people, the basic animal element, virility, the pure sexuality, which is as indispensable to literature as its finer elements. Hitherto the blackguards have had this field to themselves."

He expressed himself as immensely pleased with Denver, Colorado; said he would rather live there than anywhere else in the world; New York City was his next choice, and had been his first in youth; but its feverish life was too much for him now, in his old age. He spoke with delight of the purling streams of water that he had seen flowing through the streets of Denver,—the pure melted snow of the mountains; said he used to get up in the morning, when there, and go out on purpose to see it.

I introduced a remark of John Burroughs about the low and degraded quality of American humour, which deals with its characters as if they were despicable inferiors, and not as do the great humourists,—with genial and generous sympathy. Whitman heartily agreed with Burroughs, and said, with warm indignation, that the men out in the mountains and mines and plains of the West were the equals of the Homeric heroes or the old gods, and are so treated by Joaquin Miller, and a few others; but our newspaper scribblers spy around to pick out small sources of ridicule and burlesque. He told me a little anecdote of Carlyle. Mrs. Lowell, of Boston, had loaned Carlyle the "Harvard Memorial Biographies" (of those who fell in the war). After reading in them, Carlyle said to Mrs. Lowell, "Well, I dinna ken but I have got on the wrang track about your America." Whitman remarked that perhaps literature was not of much importance in itself, except as it helped us to look with more pleasure and profit on life,—its shows and duties.

As he sat there on the sofa (in the little parlour of the Stevens Street house in Camden), with his enormous, long-used hat on his head (the rim pushed up from the forehead to an almost perpendicular position, as is often his wont when at home—the same habit is noticeable in the portraits of Montaigne), I was impressed by his large personality,—the rich, supple-sweet fulness of flesh, delicacy on a basis of rugged strength.

February 22, 1881.—Met Whitman strolling along the sunny side of Market Street. When Gulliver was placed on his mistress's hand before the Brobdignagian looking-glass, he actually seemed to himself to have dwindled in size. So it is with me when I meet Walt Whitman,—partly on account of his imposing presence. But then, after one has talked with him for a while, he imparts his own stature (momentarily), and one goes off feeling seven feet high, like Bouchardon after reading the Iliad. Walt had on a huge ulster. In winter he always dresses warmly in thick gray clothes, which somehow seem to have a certain fulness, perfume, comfortable warmth, peculiar to him.

March 8, 1881.—Had a delightful call with Mr. G. P. Lathrop on Whitman. Lathrop's ostensible errand was to get Walt to read his Death of Lincoln piece before the St. Botolph's Club of Boston. (Satisfactorily arranged; Walt Whitman went on and gave his reading at the Hawthorne Rooms.) * I was

* Mr. Sylvester Baxter, in the *New Englander* for August, 1892, gives details of this visit. It was there and then that Osgood & Co. saw Whitman, and made overtures to publish *Leaves of Grass*. In August, 1881, he came on for a two months' stay to see the new edition through the press. Took room in Hotel Bulfinch; often rode down on horse-cars to the sea at City Point; passed an evening at Bartlett's studio, down on water-front—Joaquin Miller, Boyle O'Reilly, and others being present. It was at the Hotel Bulfinch he wrote his lines "The Sobbing of the Bells."

amused at Whitman's account of a talk he had years before with philosopher Alcott. He said: "Yes, he talked, and I listened; I talked a little; I liked his atmosphere." This struck me as droll, who knew so well the amiable weakness of my good old friend of Concord for monopolizing conversation.

BELMONT, Mass., January, 1885.—Spent several hours of January 2 with Whitman (on my way home from New Orleans). A young son of Thomas Donaldson came in for a call, and on going away bashfully kissed the old poet. Walt Whitman read us his as yet immature "Fancies at Navesink," which appeared in the *Nineteenth Century* the next August.

PHILADELPHIA, June 3, 1886.—Spent an hour or so with Walt Whitman at his little Mickle Street "shanty," as he calls his house (No. 328). He sits there "anchored" in his great chair by the front lower-floor window (scarcely able to get up and down stairs now, since his sunstroke a year ago), and holds what seems like a simple democratic court, receiving all who come to him,—bores and all,—only now and then having courteously to assert his right to some of his own time. To-day I found a young artist present, who reverently asked (what was cheerfully granted) permission to come and sit quietly in the back part of the room, for a few hours, in order to record with the pencil, if he might be able, what even the photograph could not catch. Another acquaintance was (bad-manneredly) questioning Whitman, and taking notes of what he said before his very face.

Whitman said he was now grown quite lethargic, taking little live interest in anything. The morning papers, which he dozed over a couple of hours or more every day, occupied his mind without making any demand upon his intellectual or sympathetic nature. He had promised and promised, and "re-re-promised" to write for the *Century* a paper on the War

Hospitals; but there the bundle of materials lay (at his feet under the table), waiting until the inspiration should come—if it ever did. (The article was afterwards written for the *Century*.) As Whitman sat there talking, his gray suit and white hair and beard were outlined against a huge grizzly wolf-skin, thrown over the high-backed chair, and half surrounding the entire upper half of his body; his feet rested on a salmon-coloured rug; and here and there—on the window-sill, on the floor, and on the table—were bright-red roses and other flowers, the gifts of his lovers. After his wont, he greeted everybody who passed on the sidewalk, little children and all, with a "How d' y' do!" Through his friend, Mr. Edward Carpenter, of England, he had just received a gift of £50, and at the close of my call his young friend "Warry" brought his horse and phaeton to the door, and drove him over to Philadelphia to bank the money. He spoke in the warmest terms of Mr. Carpenter, and of two English ladies, who, as I gathered, had made him (Carpenter) the medium of their tribute of admiration and gratitude to the poet. Walt Whitman spoke, indeed, with invariable kindness of everyone whose name came up during our talk,—Stedman, Symonds, Conway, and others. It is evident that he cherishes no ill-will (and never has cherished any) against either his half friends or no friends.

He had also just received from one of two charming young Quaker ladies—dear friends of his, to whom he had given a note of introduction to Tennyson—a letter giving account of their cordial reception by the Laureate and his family, who constrained them to stay to lunch, and showed them every attention. At Farringford, Tennyson's study, to which they mounted, is a sunny room at the top of a winding staircase, and commands, through green cedars of Lebanon, a lovely view of Freshwater Bay.

To pass suddenly from the poetical to the practical,—Whitman said that he was extremely annoyed by the habit the

women of his neighbourhood had of coming out two or three times a day with their brooms and stirring up the water in the gutters. He thought it caused malaria. "If they would only leave it alone!" he said.

I learned accidentally, and from several sources, that Walt Whitman still keeps up his work of ministering to the sick and suffering. His housekeeper coming in, as I sat there, informed him that Mrs. —— was not expected to live; he received the news as would a physician a report from one of his patients, and yet with a deep compassion which few physicians genuinely feel. Calling again unexpectedly one day, I found by his side a bottle of cordial destined, he said, for a sick neighbour.

Whitman's friends know that he is extremely sensitive about receiving gifts, in cases where he thinks there has been no *quid pro quo*. I learned that, after his Lincoln reading in Philadelphia, in the spring of 1886,—a reading which was, in part, a complimentary benefit on the part of friends and disciples,—Mr. Whitman insisted on handing two dollars apiece all around to the attendants behind the curtain and in the lobbies of the Opera House where the entertainment was given.

Walt Whitman's friends rarely visit him without having a hearty laugh with him over something or other. This is for the benefit of those enemies of his who are so ignorant of his nature as to assert that he is destitute of humour. On the other hand, he has his stern as well as his sad moods; in the former there is a look of power in his face that almost makes one tremble. All his nerves are well covered: he never exhibits, facially, the least emotion on hearing important or startling news; composure is his most apparent and constant trait. This immobility of feature he clearly derives from his Dutch ancestry.

June 6, 1886.—*Sunday Evening.*—Found Whitman sitting on his front stoop, talking with a negative-pugnacious reformer.

The poet entertained his ideas without a trace of impatience or severity of judgment, and yet was capable of quietly chloroforming him if he became disagreeable. He reprehended any measures that might be taken to punish the expression of even the most violent anarchistic sentiments; for the right of free speech is inviolable.

He is very much annoyed by the pestiferous brood of autograph-hunters, and by weak-headed poetlings who send him manuscripts for his kind judgment. The manuscripts he almost always throws into the waste-basket, which is indeed capacious enough in all conscience, being nothing less than one of the great wicker-work clothes-baskets employed by housekeepers on wash-days.* The poet seems to carry on his small mailing and publisher's business downstairs now, in the little parlour where he sits. By his side, amid a litter of paper, is to be seen a pile of copies of the two-volume centennial issue of his works.

A peculiar feature of Walt Whitman's personal rooms—those, I mean, which his housekeeper is not allowed to "put in order"—is the chaos of confusion in which his papers are coiled. The bump of order does not appear to exist in his cranium.

---

* I suppose there is no doubt that the following whimsical stanzas refer to Walt Whitman, and that the Philadelphia bard, their author, has had verses of his consigned to that vast and terrible waste-basket, although he says in the preface to his volume of "Poetry" that he can "confidently state that these poems are original"!:—

I saw a poet with a shaggy mane
And features leonine;
I strove to deem him great, and fain
Would love a thing divine.

But, lo! he won no mortal soul,
And loafed within his own;
His sullen mien, his eyeball's roll,
Were of the sad and lone.

He has a huge book of addresses of Whitmanites and book customers (probably several hundred names), but the entries in that plethoric and much-thumbed old volume are not indexed at all, nor are they in alphabetical order! The disorder of the dear old fellow's in-door dens (they have been to him in past years little more than sleeping places; his real study, the sky-domed vault of the earth) is, of course, apt commentary upon the loose arrangement of the prose and poetry of his books. But the habit of getting things into confusion about their rooms is one into which many old bachelor-authors fall (especially invalids), and is by no means necessarily typical of any looseness or vagueness of the logical faculties.

Whitman said he considered "Drum Taps" as an attempt to express the emotional element of the Civil War.

He asked me very emphatically to make a note of this,—that in *Leaves of Grass* his intention had been, among the rest, to put on record a complete individual; make a clean breast of it, give a true picture of the nineteenth-century man; his effort had been distinctively a liberative one,—to make a full sweep, for once, as by the fierce whirl of a child's carlacue in the dark, right through the manacling conventions which fetter the expression of a man's real soul.

He said he considered that his study of the trades, and the facts of practical life, had served to give proportion, or balance, to his writings, redeeming them from the too common fault of literary work,—namely, bookishness. He emphatically denied that his efforts in poetry were the outcome of culture, or the result of wide reading of books.

He said that, among Mr. E. C. Stedman's mistakes about him, was that which he made when he asserted of him that he did not include within the range of his sympathies the wealthy, or so-called higher classes. He has since created enemies among anarchists by his sympathetic little poems on the old Emperor William and Queen Victoria.

He spoke of the late Mrs. Anne Gilchrist as one in conversation with whom you did not have to abate the wing of your thought downward at all, in deference to any feminine narrowness of mind. Her articles on Whitman are proof enough of this, which is also strikingly evident from her letters to the poet, which I had the pleasure of reading one July day in John Burrough's summer-house overlooking the Hudson.

I visited Walt Whitman's Timber Creek haunt, rendered famous by his descriptions in *Specimen Days*. It is a dairy region, a well-cultivated, heavy-timbered, rolling, vista'd landscape; something vast and oceanic in the wide prospects; on every side beautiful green meadows are glimpsed amongst the timber, and in one direction is seen far off a range of azure hills. Extensive beds of marl are worked for fertilizing purposes; the soil is deep and rich, and life is passed by the farmers in an easy-going way and on an opulent scale. They had no terrible struggle with the rocks, as did their brothers on the granite hills of New England.

The deep-clovered meadows were booming with bumble-bees (in Walt's old lane the black-abdomened kind were darting fiercely to and fro, just as he describes them), the air was loaded with the fragrance of the clover and the grape, and people were emerging from the woods with great bouquets of the magnolia blossom in their hands; the old grassy lanes were carpeted with peppermint, and bordered with ancestral sycamores, chestnuts, and oaks; wild strawberries, blackberries, elderberries, and mountain laurel were everywhere in abundance.

The Stafford farm—Whitman's favourite summer resort—is far from the main roads, and is reached by an old grassy side road, such as I have just described. His haunt on Timber Creek is one of the loveliest spots imaginable, no element lacking to make it an ideal reverie-ground for a poet or study-place for a lover of nature. A quiet, soundless, sunken amphitheatre

far from all source of annoyance; a half-mile of beautiful natural park; cedars and beeches here and there clumping the greensward; the always-winding placid creek, or pond, deeply shaded by huge and graceful trees of all varieties; the water clear-opaque and deep,—red willow roots floating lengthily and languidly in the dark liquor, and the borders fringed with drooping plants and vines. The banks that rise high around this Plato's garden are breasts flowing with sweetest spring water, water that evidently comes right out of the gravel underlying the marl. I took a long pull at Walt's wonderful big spring,—gushing forth there arm-thick, and running over moss and mints on its way to the pond. Whitman told me that among his devices, or experiments, when he was here regaining his health, was that of rolling naked in the marly ooze made by the big spring below its source, and then lying at full length in the path of the central stream to let the pure water wash the body white again. This brought to memory a person of whom it was told me that he went through all or many of the Territories of the Great West, digging furrows in the ground, and lying down in them naked to let the earth-virtue draw out the disease, whatever it was, from his body. One is also reminded of the mud baths of Buda-Pesth.

While walking about this little park, it flashed across my mind that it would be a capital thing for Walt Whitman to have a summer "shanty" there. I cautiously sounded him on the subject, and learned by his eager response ("Oh, how often I have thought of it!") that it was one of the dearest wishes of his heart to have a house somewhere, either by the sea or in the country, where he could breathe pure air, and come daily face to face with nature. Conversation with friends in Philadelphia seemed to indicate that it was not just then feasible to raise a "Walt Whitman Cottage Fund." But the idea was clearly a good one; and, later on, in Boston, was taken up with energy and quiet enthusiasm by Mr. Sylvester Baxter, who was

assisted very materially by Mrs. Elizabeth Fairchild, John Boyle O'Reilly, and Dr. William Wesselhoeft. The result of two months' generous work by Mr. Baxter (in the intervals of his journalistic and political business) was that a fund of $800 was raised and forwarded to the poet, who wrote us his "joyfullest thanks" and "God bless you's." An architect had contributed a plan; Low, of Boston, gave tiles for fireplace, and Montgomery Safford the site for cottage. But Walt never got around to building, and used the money, by cheerful permission of the contributors, for other purposes.

To my reminiscences of the poet in his later years, and my description of his homes and haunts, let me at this point add some notes of others:—

Says Colonel James M. Scovel * in the *Critic* (1885):—

"Walt Whitman's present domicile is a little old-fashioned frame house, situated about gun-shot from the Delaware River, on a clean, quiet, democratic street. This 'shanty,' as he calls it, was purchased by the poet a couple of years ago for $2000—two-thirds cash, the rest he owes. In it he occupies the second floor. I began by likening his home to that of a ship, and the comparison might go further. Though larger than any ship's cabin, Walt Whitman's room at 328 Mickle Street, Camden, has all the rudeness, simplicity, and free-and-easy character of the quarters of some old sailor. In the good-sized three-windowed apartment—20 by 20 feet, or over—there are a wood stove, a bare board floor of narrow planks, a comfortable

* It must be said here, once for all, that many of Colonel Scovel's newspaper utterances about Walt Whitman are unauthentic and misleading. He colours them with his own atmosphere, and attributes sayings to Whitman which he never did say as they appear. My own feeling about this is corroborated by Walt Whitman's friends in Camden and Philadelphia. The papers of Scovel, however, which are included in this volume are authenticated by Whitman himself.

bed, divers big and little boxes, a good gas-lamp, two big tables, a few old uncushioned seats, and lots of pegs and hooks and shelves. Hung or tacked on the wall are pictures,—those of his father, mother, and sisters holding the places of honour,—a portrait of a sweetheart of long ago, a large print of Osceola, the Seminole chief (given to Whitman many years since by the maker of it from life, Catlin the artist), some rare old engravings by Strange, and 'Banditti Regaling' by Mortimer. Heaps of books, manuscripts, memoranda, scissorings, proof-sheets, pamphlets, newspapers, old and new magazines, mysterious-looking literary bundles, tied up with stout strings, lie about the floor here and there. Off against the back wall looms a mighty trunk, having double locks and bands of iron—such a receptacle as comes over sea with the foreign emigrants, and you in New York may have seen hoisted by powerful tackle from the hold of some Hamburg ship. On the main table more books, some of them evidently old-timers, a Bible, several Shakspeares, a nook devoted to translations of Homer and Æschylus and the other Greek poets, with Felton's and Symonds's books on Greece; a collection of the works of Fauriel and Ellis on mediæval poetry, a well-thumbed volume (his companion, off and on, for fifty years) of Walter Scott's 'Border Minstrelsy,' Tennyson, Ossian, Burns, Omar Khayyám—all miscellaneously together. Whitman's stalwart form itself luxuriates in a curious, great cane-seat chair, with posts and rungs like ship's spars, altogether the most imposing heavy-timbered, broad-armed, and broad-bottomed edifice of the kind possible. It was the Christmas gift of the young son and daughter of Thomas Donaldson of Philadelphia, and was specially made for the poet."

In another paper the same authority says:—

"Gifted with a clear and resonant voice, the poet often gratifies his friends, as he sits by a blazing wood fire (which is his delight), in singing old-fashioned songs. He often sings

'The Wearing of the Green' *con amore.* After a good supper and a generous bottle of old Falernian, or some wine of more modern vintage, Walt has been known to recite some of his own poems (notably 'My Captain' and the 'Mystic Trumpeter'*) or Henry Murger's 'Midnight Visitor.' . .

"He does not change his dress if he goes out to a 'swell' dinner, and his simple suit of gray is his only wear."

Writing in 1885, the same acquaintance says:—"Whitman gets out of doors regularly in fair weather, much enjoys the Delaware River, is a great frequenter of the Camden and Philadelphia Ferry, and may occasionally be seen sauntering along Chestnut or Market Street in the latter city. He has a curious sort of public sociability, talking with black and white, high and low, male and female, old and young, of all grades. He gives a word or two of friendly recognition, or a nod or smile, to each. Yet he is by no means a marked talker or logician anywhere. I know an old book-stand man who always speaks of him as Socrates. But in one respect the likeness is entirely deficient. Whitman never argues, disputes, or holds or invites a cross-questioning bout with any human being."

The Cleveland Leader, June, 1885, contained an account of an authentic interview with Walt Whitman by Mr. W. H. Ballou. A few extracts follow:—

"It having been announced that Walt Whitman was about to go abroad to visit Lord Tennyson, I hastened from New York to Camden, New Jersey, to solicit an interview. Camden is the alleged Brooklyn of Philadelphia. The corner groceryman pointed out a low, two-story frame house. . . The window sills, bordered with white, were mounted with old-

* [And both with the power and pathos of a Scott-Siddons or an Edmund Kean. The deeply felt emotion with which "My Captain" is read invariably brings tears to the eyes of hearers.]

fashioned green blinds." The left hand lower window was Mr. Whitman's favourite seat. A white curtain was hung across the lower part of the window inside, and, in summer, flowers were to be seen in a tumbler or vase on the sill.

"As I passed one of the parlour windows to mount the door-steps [continues the reporter], I saw a small picture of Victor Hugo, framed and bordered with mourning, hanging in a pane of glass. Then I thought of the numerous obituary accounts of Hugo throughout the English-speaking world which had interwoven the two names together as the exponents of the most advanced literature of the two hemispheres. A young woman came to the door. She ushered me into a little parlour, and, without taking my name, went up stairs to announce to the poet the arrival of a guest.

"While waiting, I glanced around the room. The furniture was of the plainest old-fashioned type. A canary sang with all his might, and a kitten played to and fro. Piles of papers and magazines were stacked in chairs and on the floor, and several [three] oil paintings were pendent from the walls,—one of these being a portrait of the father of the poet, and another that of his mother. [The third oil painting represents a maternal (Dutch) ancestor of Walt Whitman, and is probably some two hundred years old, having been brought to this country from Holland. Whitman is very well pleased to find in this far-off ancestor marks of a rich, solid, and hearty physical nature; and, in truth, the man has a noble and cavalier-like air, as of a soldier in the times of Captain Dalgetty,—which like enough he was.]

"I was interrupted in my investigation by the sound of heavy footsteps descending the narrow stairs. A tall form appeared at the doorway, straight as an arrow, and my hand was cordially grasped. The poet's hair and beard were fleecy, shining, white, and long; his clothing was of the simplest type,—

a sack coat of tweed, and trousers of the same material, hand-knit hose, and low calf shoes of granger type."

The conversation that followed, although authentically reported, was not liked by Walt Whitman. We all converse at times when we are not at our best, and feel we have not expressed ourselves as we should have liked.

Several times a year it was Walt Whitman's custom to go down from Camden to the seashore, either to have a good dinner with friends or to absorb the sea-spell alone.

> "By the sea waves he was strong;
> He heard their medicinal song,
> Asked no physician but the wave,
> No palace but his sea-beat cave."

Then every year "Billy Thompson"—a popular caterer of Gloucester on the Delaware, just below Philadelphia and Camden—opened the season with a dinner of "planked shad" and champagne in honour of Walt Whitman and a few invited friends. Whitman had a head for wine like that of Socrates, or old Osbaldistone in Scott's novel, and never had any difficulty in disposing comfortably of his two bottles of champagne after dinner. Billy is called "the Statesman" by some of his patrons. The planking of the shad for the Whitman symposium of 1887 is jovially described by Colonel Scovel:—

"The Statesman insisted on taking the Poet to the kitchen to see the process. The veteran slowly limped into the kitchen on Billy's arm, with the aid of a stout cane. There he saw an oak board two feet square, clean as a bright diamond, hot as Erebus. A monster shad, eight pounds in weight, was laid tenderly on the hot side of the plank, and two silver nails fastened it down securely. Then it was placed at an angle of forty-five degrees in front of a red-hot coal fire, while Scipio basted the savoury fish with butter which was caught in a dripping-pan beneath.

"'The very sight whets one's appetite,' said Whitman, rub-

bing his hands together, and standing like old Homer before the fire."

Colonel Scovel gives us quite an interesting glimpse into Whitman's finances (Springfield Republican, June 5, 1885) :—

"Whitman doesn't make much money. When the brief sway of the Osgood edition (some three or four months) was brought to an end by District Attorney Stevens's threat of prosecution, J. R. Osgood & Co. owed him about $500 cash for royalties. In payment of this the author agreed to accept the electrotype plates of the *Leaves*, which were turned over to him, being shipped to Philadelphia; and from them David McKay, publisher, of the latter city, issued in the latter part of 1882 two editions. Whitman received from them nearly $1300. For 1883 his royalties amounted to $300. For 1884 they sank to less than $200.

"He gets an occasional lift from the periodicals: Harpers have paid him pretty well,—$100 for 'Song of the Redwood Tree;' $50 for the 22-line piece, 'With Husky-haughty Lips, O Sea;' $30 for the nine-line piece, 'Of that Blithe Throat of Thine;' and the same sum for the late little piece, 'As One by One withdraw the Lofty Actors.' The *Critic* also accepts and pays for all he sends them. These, however, it must be confessed, are the exceptions which prove the rule. It is a curious fact that *Leaves of Grass*, while known and discussed in the literary circles of all lands, has yet obtained no first-class publisher (with the exception of Osgood), but has gone from pillar to post even to this day. Some of the past negotiations about its publication would yield interesting items. At the instance of a personal friend, years ago, Ticknor & Fields came very near publishing it; and, after seriously entertaining the idea, only decided adversely because 'it would militate against their other issues, poetry, etc.' The senior of the firm said to this friend, 'I have thought seriously of the subject; there is money in the book as well as genius, but upon the whole, situated as

we are, it will not do for us to take hold of it.' The friend alluded to (J. T. Trowbridge) also talked with Lee & Shepard of Boston, who thought it over. Mr. Lee finally said frankly: 'From mere considerations of policy, I wouldn't to-day put our names to a first edition of Byron, or even of the Bible. When Walt Whitman has become a standard book like them, as I suppose he will, any firm will be glad to publish him." *

I must here memorandize a very pleasant incident in Mr. Whitman's life. The effect of a sunstroke which he experienced in July, 1885, was seriously to lower his fund of vital strength, weaken the spring of his constitution, and almost wholly destroy his walking power. For such a lover of nature not to be able to get out doors was a calamity than which no greater could be imagined. His friend, Mr. Thomas Donaldson, solved the difficulty by putting it in the way of a circle of his intimate friends and lovers to surprise him with the gift of a horse and phaeton. One day in mid-September, 1885, a pretty phaeton, drawn by a sorrel horse, drew up before the door at 328 Mickle Street, in Camden. The poet was sitting by the open window of the ground-floor room talking with a visitor, when a chubby, round-faced boy—the driver of the phaeton—placed a big white envelope in his hand. "What's all this?" he said, in a tone of perplexity, as he glanced at the contents of the envelope. The paper read as follows: "To Walt Whitman, with the compliments of his friends." † "As Whitman read," says the Boston *Herald* (in its half-column despatch, September 15, 1885, giving an account of the matter), "he occasionally

* [Mr. Trowbridge tells me he discovered a seller of antique books in Boston who consented to put his imprint on a small edition of Leaves of Grass. But Walt Whitman wrote me that he knew of no such edition.]

† Among those on the list of names were the following: John G. Whittier, Charles Dudley Warner, Samuel L. Clemens, Richard Watson Gilder, Oliver Wendell Holmes, John Boyle O'Reilly, Edwin Booth, Horace Howard Furness, Lawrence Barrett. There were many others.

stopped, looked thoughtfully at the paper, made some remark of personal esteem for the name he had read, and then went on. When he had finished, he was silent for several minutes. Then he gave a start, as though he had just begun to realize what had happened. 'Well, I must look at my gift,' he said. (He had not before looked at the horse and phaeton, both of which glistened in the sunshine.) . . . 'Coming in this concrete way, in the shape of a horse and carriage and this list of names, it's altogether the most penetrating thing I've had happen to me. It's all pleasant enough to hear friends say they admire *Leaves of Grass;* but, when their friendship takes the form of a horse and carriage, it's quite effective.' For a half-hour Whitman talked of other and impersonal matters. Then his housekeeper, Mrs. Davis, having come in, he was assisted to the curb and into the phaeton. The lad who had driven it to the door mounted beside him to be carried to the ferry. Several of the poet's neighbours gazed with wonder as he grasped the reins and drove away.

"'I am delighted,' said Whitman to a friend last evening. 'The gift is delicate, welcome, and an honour.'"

The horse and phaeton were sold in 1889, when the wheeled chair took their place, this being the only form of out-door exercise he could take after that date.

One day in the spring of 1887 Walt Whitman was surprised and pleased by a visit from a Southern admirer,—Mr. John Newton Johnson, a cotton planter,—"dressed in true Southern planter style,—broad-brimmed hat, short jacket, and knicker-bockers (knee breeches) and boots." He had travelled over seven hundred miles, from Mid, [curious name!] Marshall County, Alabama, on purpose to see his poet. Said Mr. Whitman:* "He was a veritable diamond, a diamond in the rough. He can accurately be described by that phrase. He is

* To a reporter of the Camden *Courier*, May 19, 1887.

also a natural philosopher, and I feel highly complimented at his exhibition of devotion in travelling such a long distance to see me. I was surprised to find that he had memorized nearly all my poems. He undoubtedly knows more about my poetry, and more of it, than any man living. It surprised me very much. He wanted to talk *in extenso* regarding them, and to offer criticisms upon them, but I am always loath to speak much on that subject." It appears, further, that Mr. Johnson was a "Rebel" soldier in the Civil War, has a family of ten children, and has for many years made it his pleasure to repeat the grand passages of *Leaves of Grass* at Southern Sunday schools, concerts, church meetings, and other gatherings. In brief, the book has been his Bible, and he a kind of Walt Whitman missionary (the forerunner of ten thousand others, I believe).

In a letter from Mr. Johnson to me, written (with permission to publish) directly after his return home, he states that one of his objects in going on to Camden was to scold his poet face to face for the changes he had made from his fifth and sixth editions in getting out the centennial and Osgood editions. Mr. Johnson thinks that the later editions show a "toning down of refreshing savagery and grim laconicism." He says that Whitman admitted that a few things were left out of the last edition by accident. The poet did not, however, permit him to say to him more than he "boldly and intrusively thrust upon him on this subject." Mr. Johnson regrets, for example, certain brief omissions in "Outlines for a Tomb," "Vocalism," "Leaf of Voices," and "Carol of Harvest." This is the old question of contest between an author's early readers and himself regarding his right to alter and amend. For my part, I find that, when Whitman uses the file, he does so for good and sufficient reasons. His excisions are almost, if not quite, invariably the excision of either crudities or superfluities. (I would, however, myself except the amended introductory

lines of "Starting from Paumanok.") Mr. Johnson, in his letter, continues as follows :—

"Mr. Whitman seemed to take it in more willingly when I suggested that his poems or pieces ought to be printed in small 'parts,' and circulated in that way, so that his friends (who know the excellence of the whole) could give to the masses successive 'tastes.' As the very voluminousness of the Jewish and Christian Bibles mystifies, and unavoidably thereby, sectarianizes their believers, so *Leaves of Grass* is too big a book to do best with the stomachs which are soon filled so as to 'loathe even the honeycomb.' Mr. Whitman kindly accepted my suggestion that it would be well if the whole work were so arranged and paged that unbound copies could be taken to pieces for distribution to supply beginners with those 'tastes.' Yet he did not talk much with me anyway in time of probably twelve or fifteen visits in thirty-nine days. I think he acted under his physician's instructions to avoid much excitement—and very justly, in accordance with the law of self-preservation, which we know [that] all, and now he in particular, ought to keep constantly in mind. Yet I confess that, most of the thirty-nine days I was near him, I feared I would, as a strictly candid and (methodically and on principle) unreserved man, be compelled to go off *and say* he did not seem to be the warm-hearted, unselfish, 'altruistic' character indicated by his writings. I therefore exposed myself to being thought 'a bore' by lingering around there, and making more frequent visits, perhaps, than I would if he had been more 'friendly and flowing.' (I had read a statement that Lincoln, after worshipping Clay at a distance, at last visited him and was disenchanted). I did not care one bit to be able to brag of what or how he esteemed or treated me; but I did very much wish to be able to say, as others have, that the man is better and greater than the book. It was fair that he should fear the uncultured and impulsive farmer might get into some

escapade that might bring discredit or trouble. And yet the much I had before written to him during thirteen years ought to have assured him, past all fears, that his man was remarkably *strong* (I think)."

As the experience of our *naïve* and self-confident friend, Johnson, has been that of some others, suppose we dwell for a moment on it. In the first place, it is very evident that Mr. Johnson made a mistake in attempting to call his friend to account and make him explain,—a thing which all poets detest, and he above all (as he has repeatedly said). Then it must be remembered that the tremendous firmness of Walt Whitman's nature grew more inflexible with advancing years. Thirdly, I happen to know, incidentally, from his letters and postal-cards to me at the time of Mr. Johnson's visit (that aggravating transition period from spring to summer) that he was not only favoured with a constant influx of visitors,—not a day to himself for six weeks,—but was suffering deeply from unusually poor health,—congested brain and lethargy of the whole body,—so much so that he did "not feel like either thinking, talking, or writing" (his words to me). Yet there *were* grim and repellent traits in Walt Whitman. He was as naked of manners and suave apologies as the scarred crag of the Matterhorn of verdure. He took it always for granted that explanations, as between friends, were needless, and should be needless with strong natures.

As the years went by, the interest in Walt Whitman cumulatively increased. In 1887, among letters received by him was one from Lord Tennyson (many were the messages back and forth between them) thanking him for his comments in the New York *Critic* on "Locksley Hall: Sixty Years After." Some of our Scottish cousins are a little "off" in their utterances about Whitman. Robert Buchanan, for instance, in a right strong and manly eulogy of his friend, (see his "Look Round Literature") remarks (*apropos* of a call on the poet

which he made some years ago, in Camden) that "pie is the main pabulum of Whitman's life." This will be, I fancy, quite amusing to Whitman's friends. In looking over my own letters and postal-cards received from him during the past eleven years, I find numerous references to meals of stewed oysters, graham-bread toast, custard, coffee, stewed rabbit, and "a rousing shad and champagne dinner down on the coast;" and I myself ate a bit of steak with him at his own table in his Mickle Street home. It is true, however, that he ate little heavy meat during his later years, as a general thing; and he suffered much from stomachic troubles (though scarcely ever mentioning the fact). Only one thing seemed to have the power of forcing from him an occasional lament, and that was prolonged stormy weather, when bad health kept him in doors for days or weeks. And it was at such times that he was especially grateful for letters from friends. On these occasions, let but the sun shine out for an hour or so, and his blithe canary strike up a winsome gay song, ("flooding the house with trills," as he wrote), and the heart of the old man was cheered, and ten to one but he would seize the moment to write a card to some friend, never forgetting to mention the singing of the bird and the shining of the sun.

In December, 1886, another fiery-hearted Scotch friend, more enthusiastic than judicious, got up a great bugaboo scare about Whitman being in a starving condition. It was an unwarranted (and to Whitman quite annoying) statement; but the newspaper discussion that followed turned out to be useful, netting the poet the sum, it is stated, of about a hundred and twenty-five pounds or so, obtained through the agency of the *Pall Mall Gazette*. When Whitman's attention was called to the matter by a newspaper man in Camden, he said:—

"I always have enough to supply my daily wants, thanks to my kind friends at home and abroad; and am in no immediate danger of perishing. My friends in Great Britain are very

kind, and have on several occasions recollected me in little acts of pecuniary attention for which I am very grateful. About a year ago a testimonial of this sort from friends in England was sent me. It was very acceptable. Though, as I before stated, I have no knowledge of such a circular as the one you describe, yet if such a paper is being circulated and accomplishes its evident purpose, I will not decline the gift whether it be money or what not, and will thank the generous donors for their benefactions. Regarding the insinuation of my being in want of the necessaries of life, I will state that I make it a rule never to affirm or deny stories the design of which is to malign or injure me. You can see for yourself my present condition. Yes, I will say I am not in want. My health is reasonably good."

At the close of 1886 one or two Boston friends of Whitman started a movement for securing him a pension. Mr. Sylvester Baxter mentioned the matter to the Member of Congress from his district, Mr. H. B. Lovering, and on February 1, 1887, Report No. 3856, entitled "Walt Whitman," was submitted to the House and ordered to be printed. The report covers three pages, and is largely composed of extracts from Dr. Bucke's "Walt Whitman" relating to the hospital work of the poet: "The risks he took in dressing sickening fetid wounds, many times brought in crawling with corruption, eventually broke him down. His splendid physique, his peculiarly sensitive and sympathetic nature, was sapped by labour, watchings, dreads, deaths, and anxieties of three long years, before it finally succumbed to disease," culminating in a paralytic stroke in 1873.

On this matter of the pension, Whitman is reported by the Philadelphia *Press* of January 20, 1887, to have spoken as follows:—

"Mr. Baxter, of Boston, wrote to me about five weeks ago, saying that my Boston friends wished and proposed to push a Pension Bill for me through Congress, by the aid of Mr.

Lovering, of the committee on pensions, who was favourable to the project, and asking my consent. I immediately wrote to Boston, in answer to the letter, peremptorily refusing. When I saw, in the *Press*, the announcement of the proposed pension, I thought of writing a declination, but upon further thought I have decided to let the proposition take its course.

"I shall not be disappointed," he continued, "if it fails to pass; but if it does pass I will gladly accept it. I am not in actual want; but when persons of wealth and kind inclinations, either at home or abroad, offer to aid me, I appreciate and accept their kindness and good will. I have been aided by gifts from men and women of distinction abroad, especially in Great Britain, during the past winter. I received a handsome New Year's present of £80 from Sir Edward Malet (British ambassador at Berlin), Lord Ronald Gower, and A. Gerstenberg, the latter a wealthy Hebrew in the British army."

This pension movement came to naught.

In 1887 Whitman imparted to a young friend (Harrison S. Morris) some idea of his method of collecting material for a poem. The following is a transcript of Mr. Morris's notes :—

"He said an idea would strike him which, after mature thought, he would consider fit to be the 'special theme' of a 'piece.' This he would revolve in his mind in all its phases, and finally adopt, setting it down crudely on a bit of paper,—the back of an envelope or any scrap,—which he would place in an envelope. Then he would lie in wait for any other material which might bear upon or lean toward that idea, and, as it came into his mind, he would put it on paper and place it in the same envelope. After he had quite exhausted the supply of suggestions, or had a sufficient number to interpret the idea withal, he would interweave them in a 'piece,' as he called it. I asked him about the arrangement or succession of the slips, and he said, 'They always fall properly into place.'"

It thus appears that Walt Whitman's method of composition

resembled that of Emerson, his envelopes answering to Emerson's commonplace-books.

On April 6, 1887, Whitman read his Lincoln lecture at the Unitarian church in Camden, "holding the rapt attention of the large audience for over an hour." On April 12 he was "convoyed on" (to use his own phrase) to New York City by his Quaker friend, Mr. R. Pearsall Smith,* for the purpose of reading the same lecture there on April 14, the anniversary of the death of Lincoln. "I don't make much account of the New York Lecture," he wrote to me under date of April 11, "the best is to be borne in mind (and warmly borne in mind) by a few New York friends." It is clear that he had no suspicion of the brilliancy of the reception that was awaiting him. After it was all over, and he was back in Camden, he wrote: "Stood it very well in New York. It was a good break from my monotonous days here, but if I had stayed long I should have been killed with kindness and attention."

On the afternoon of the 14th, at four o'clock, the audience being assembled, the poet walked slowly out from the right upon the stage, which was rather showily decorated to represent a drawing-room. He leaned as he walked upon the arm of his young friend, William Duckett, of Camden. "In the hearty applause that greeted him there was a fervour of affection that called the colour to his cheek and the moisture to his

* Mr. Smith, as is known, is a wealthy and cultured glass manufacturer of Philadelphia, now resident in England much of the time, friend of Gladstone's, etc. He and his daughters—Miss Alys Smith and Mrs. Costelloe, wife of the member of the London Council—have been for years stanchest friends of Walt Whitman. The same is true of Mr. J. A. Johnston of New York, through whose interest and labour (chiefly) the 1887 reading in New York was brought about. Mr. Johnston is "a wide-awake diamond merchant, with Dundreary whiskers, and face aglow with good nature." A scholarly and genial, unassuming gentleman he seemed to me at Walt Whitman's funeral.

eyes. While the applause continued, his hand nervously pushed back the long white hair from his face, and wandered aimlessly down the snowy beard that sweeps his broad chest." His voice some thought not to be quite firm at first, but this was evidently due to emotion, and he soon recovered his usual positive and hearty tone. The lecturer was dressed in a dark sack coat, with dark-gray waistcoat and trousers, low shoes, and gray woollen socks. The spotless linen of his ample cuffs and rolling collar was trimmed with a narrow band of edging, and the cuffs were turned up over the ends of the coat sleeves. (I quote here from the *Critic's* excellent report.) On the back of a chair, on the left of the stage, hung a handsome laurel wreath, with red, white, and blue satin streamers dependent therefrom, on which Mr. Wilson Barrett, the English actor, had inscribed various cordial sentiments, such as these: "How like a winter hath thy absence been," "So long! Walt Whitman." When he had acknowledged the greeting of the audience, Whitman sat down beside a stand upholstered in blue plush, laid his old-fashioned curl-top't cane on the carpeted floor, put on a pair of eye-glasses, leaned one elbow on the stand, and proceeded to read his lecture from a little book upon whose pages the manuscript and printed fragments were pasted. His high, slightly nasal, though pleasant voice, was not raised above a conversational pitch, and yet was distinctly audible in all parts of the theatre. "As he told the story slowly and clearly, the effect was peculiar. He made no gestures; but, as his words touched any part of the theatre [he was describing an event which occurred in a theatre], he would look up at it in a way that was better than any gesture, and was impressive in the extreme." James Russell Lowell, John Burroughs, and Professor Charles Eliot Norton, occupied the box at the poet's right. Mr. E. C. Stedman and his family were seated in the opposite box. Others present were Samuel L. Clemens, H. C. Bunner, Frank Stockton, Moncure D. Conway, Joel Benton,

Colonel John Hay, Edward Eggleston, Andrew Carnegie, Augustus St. Gaudens, Mrs. Frances Hodgson Burnett, Richard Watson Gilder, Mrs. Mary Mapes Dodge, President Gilman of John Hopkins' University, Professor James A. Harrison, Mrs. M. G. Van Rensselaer, and Miss Jeanette Gilder.

An old-time friend of Whitman's who was present wrote afterwards that the whole event, with its peculiar setting and dramatic incidents, suggested to him a sort of coronation. Old theatre-goers said they never before saw just such an audience. An actor said that in a certain royalty of pose and appearance the poet reminded him of Lear all the while he was on the stage. To another his manner and pose were those of a venerable patriarch in his study, talking to his friends who had gathered round him. The lecture was occasionally interrupted by applause. At the close, by way of delicate allusion to Whitman's great theme on Lincoln, a little girl—Laura Stedman, the five-years old grand-daughter of the banker-poet—walked out upon the stage and presented the reader with a basket of lilac blossoms,—a little episode thus prettily described in the next morning's *New York Times* :—

"Forth on the stage came a beautiful basket of lilac blossoms, and behind it was a little bit of a maiden in a white Normandy cap, and a little suit of Quaker gray, her eyes beaming, and her face deeply impressed with the gravity of the occasion. She walked to where he sat, and held out her gift without a word. He stared, took them, and then took her. It was December frost and May-time blossom at their prettiest contrast as the little pink cheek shone against the snow-white beard, for the old man told his appreciation mutely by kissing her, and kissing her again," the audience meanwhile applauding sympathetically. Whitman then recited his poem, "O Captain!" and the curtain fell amid warm applause. There was immediately an inroad of ladies and gentlemen behind the scenes to meet him: some of his lady friends made quite a point of kissing the venerable

bachelor,—arch-hero worshippers that they are. In the evening at least 250 admirers called upon him in the parlours of the Westminster Hotel,—the rooms that were occupied by Charles Dickens when he was on his last visit to the United States. The poet sat in an easy-chair of dark crimson velvet in the centre of the rear parlour to receive his guests. Among the first to enter was John Burroughs. Robert Collyer soon came in, and was warmly greeted by Whitman. "A fine study for an artist was the good, but no longer gray, poet, as he reclined on his cushioned seat, with his ruddy complexion heightened by the excitement of the moment, his silver hair falling like sunlit snowdrifts over his brow and breast and shoulders, and his bright eye growing brighter as he gave ready answers to the questions showered upon him by some youthful visitors, whose endeavour to draw out the lion of the occasion seemed rather too persistent, considering the age and feebleness of their too willing subject.*

On the following morning a few friends breakfasted with him at the house of his admirer, Mr. R. W. Gilder, after which he drove to Cox's to be photographed. One who saw him in front of the camera said: "He must have had twenty pictures taken, yet he never *posed* for a moment. He simply sat in the big revolving chair and swung himself to the right or to the left, as Mr. Cox directed, or took his hat off or put it on again, his expression and attitude remaining so natural that no one would have supposed he was sitting for a photograph." Still later in the day he was driven to the studio of Miss Dora Wheeler, to whom he had promised a sitting. He returned to Camden in the afternoon, and in a few days, at the urgent request of his friend, R. P. Smith, went over to some quarters prepared for him in Arch Street, Philadelphia, where he sat for his bust to the sculptor, St. Gaudens. He was besieged in his Camden

* For a more detailed account of the evening reception, see *Appendix*.

home by at least one other sculptor, Mr. Sydney H. Morse, of Boston, and by two portrait-makers: he patiently allowed and enjoyed all.

The net proceeds of the New York lecture were $600. Of this sum, $350 was paid, as box fee, by Mr. Andrew Carnegie, author of "Triumphant Democracy." In the letter to a friend of Whitman's, enclosing the cheque, he wrote: "When the *Pall Mall Gazette* raised a subscription for Mr. Whitman, I felt triumphant democracy disgraced. Whitman is the great poet of America so far."

In August, a few months after this New York experience, Burroughs visited his old friend in Camden. He found Whitman supremely indifferent to a malodorous attack of Swinburne, although I myself was told by a friend that, in conversation with him on the subject, he flamed out with, "Swinburne is the d——dst simulacrum!" Burroughs and Whitman took a twenty-mile drive together on this occasion, Walt, as usual, saluting everyone he met, after the old Long Island custom of his people.

In the last days of May, 1888, I again saw the poet in Camden. He had the old dignity and kindness of manner, though grown considerably more lethargic and slow in his mental powers. You learn by seeing this man in his home that a great poet may be as perfect and sweet-mannered a gentleman in the humblest house in a humble neighbourhood of a prosaic suburb (possessed of little wealth but his mind) as any rich and titled poet or scholar of Boston, Cambridge, Concord, London, or Paris.

As I entered the room, on my first call, he was talking with his brother "Jeff," the civil engineer of St. Louis, for many years connected with the Water Board of that city,—a fine, manly, hearty fellow of the practical type. He had brought his brother a potted tea-rose (which bloomed the next day), and exchanged with him at parting an affectionate comradely

kiss. Whitman remarked that he suffered somewhat from want of persons to cheer and rouse him up: most visitors came to him to disburden themselves of their own sorrows and confessions.

On my calling the next day with his young friend Horace Traubel and another, we all fell to discussing the authorship of the Shakspere plays, (a copy of Donelly's "Great Cryptogram" lay on the floor), Whitman admitted that the telling way in which Donelly had marshalled the old facts (giving them the force of a projectile), had not only shaken his belief in the Shaksperean authorship of the plays, but had firmly convinced him that Shakspere of Stratford could not be the author,—although he could not agree that Bacon was the man, and thinks the cipher nonsense. (Later he seems to have accepted even the cipher. See his little stanza on the subject). He maintained his new view with his customary good-natured stubbornness.

He was just receiving the first proofs of his new book of poems, "November Boughs," (many of the poems had been printed with some aggravating errors,—in the *New York Herald*).

A new oil portrait of Whitman (by Thomas Eakins, a pupil of Gerôme), hung on the wall, and was liked by Whitman. It is a work of fine technical merit, has power in it beyond a doubt; but the expression and pose are not liked by many. To me it has something of the look of a jovial and somewhat dissipated old Dutch toper,—such as Rubens or Teniers might have painted.

The accumulation of literary litter in the room had grown to portentous proportions. The table groaned under a load which threatened momentarily to topple over on to the floor. As to the floor itself, navigation was rendered highly precarious by the thick sand-bars of books, newspapers, manuscripts, and magazines which crossed the room in every direction. In one corner,

under the canary-bird's cage, stood Morse's bust of Elias Hicks, in plaster, (with a newspaper over his pate to keep off the dust, and giving good Elias something the look of an old man who was afraid of taking cold in his bald head). In another corner was Morse's little clay statuette (seated figure) of Whitman. As I took off the clinging wrappages I found I had taken the roof away from a nest of little brown ants that had got in at the window, and were busily engaged in rearing their young in the lap of the figure.

A neighbour at whose hospitable home Whitman was often found (he dined there every Sunday, I believe, for some time), is Mr. Thomas B. Harned, a young lawyer of Camden, who is strongly attached to Whitman as a man, and to his books as literature. A pleasant affair was the evening reception and supper given to the poet on his sixty-ninth birthday by Mr. and Mrs. Harned. The supper-table was richly coloured with flowers, and the Pomery Sec was delicious. Whitman during the evening sang a stave or two of "Home, Sweet Home," as an attempt to illustrate the triumphant, exultant manner in which the song was rendered fifty years ago in the days when he himself knew its author, John Howard Payne. A young lady, Miss Weda Cook, with a voice of rare volume and sweetness, sang to music of her own composing, "O Captain, My Captain," (encouraged by a gentle-kindly ejaculation of "Bravo, bravo!" from the poet). At half-past nine we helped the old poet to his carriage, and he drove off into the darkness, erect as a soldier, and holding in his hand a wreath of snowy spiraea woven doubtless by the hands of the hostess or of demure little Anna, the daughter, his child-friend.

Four days afterwards Whitman again experienced an incipient attack of paralysis, or rather three of them, brought on, it is thought, by "an unspeakable hour," as he described it, passed by him alone by the Delaware, (June 2nd, Sunday afternoon), whither he had driven alone in his phaeton, in con-

templation of the sunset.* Says Mr. Thos. B. Harned, in a letter to me dated June 6th, "Dr. Bucke was in Philadelphia, and I wired him and also Dr. Osler. They say it might have been fatal. Walt is much better now, but very weak. We may expect his death at almost any time. During his last attack his speech was temporarily affected. It was very affecting, his whole frame shook, and as I stood over him, he muttered, 'It will pass over soon, and, if it doesn't, it will be all right.'"

Mr. Horace Tranbel wrote me from Camden, under date of October 10, 1888, of the few additional down-lines of his face, a heavier cast to the expression, and his frequent paleness, as resultants of this stroke of June 4. Recovery from it was never complete.

May 31, 1889, Walt Whitman's birthday was celebrated in Camden by a group of friends and an account of the affair published in book form.†

Thomas B. Harned, the poet's neighbour and friend, spoke, among other things, of his innumerable charities to the poor and the neglected and the forgotten in Camden, of his always confining his own expenses within meagre limits, that he might have more to spend for others.

Herbert H. Gilchrist told of Whitman's victories in Great Britain, alike in the antique and moss-grown walls of Oxford and Cambridge, and among the toilers at Sheffield, Newcastle, and Glasgow, including all of Scotland and Ireland. "Our guest," said he, "can picture in his mind's eye the sagacious good-natured glance which shines upon him to-day from beneath soot-begrimed brows and smirched faces of brawny colliers, powerful smiths, and mechanics."

Mr. Henry L. Bonsall noted (as showing the absence of

* *New England Magazine*, May 1, 1891.

† "Camden's Compliment to Walt Whitman," edited by Horace L. Tranbel. Philadelphia: David M'Kay, 1889.

conventional manners and attitudes in Whitman) that the coloured cook was the first to rush out to greet him when he appeared at the supper in his wheeled chair!

Gabriel Sarrazin, of Paris, wrote, "Walt Whitman is, in my opinion, one of the only two living beings—the other is Count Léon Tolstoï—to whom is applicable the name of *Apostle*. And, if I could permit myself to make a comparison between two men equally great, I should not hesitate to place Whitman one degree above Tolstoï. . . . He is the only man who has absolutely *known* that Man is an indivisible fragment of the universal Divinity." Hence, loving one's fellows, one loves God. Whitman has been in this era, says Sarrazin, the practical apostle of this view, which is destined to renovate the world.

Mrs. Mary Whitall Costelloe wrote from London, "Tell Mr. Whitman that a day never passes without our talking of him and wishing for his presence."

Rudolf Schmidt, of Copenhagen, wrote,—

"To me 'Democratic Vistas' is the far-shining pinnacle of all that Walt Whitman has done. These few sheets represent a whole literature; they range their author among the great seers of all times. These Northern Scandinavian countries are perhaps the best field for such broad democratic views. Recently a rector of a school in Slesorg wrote me that he had read my translation of 'Democratic Vistas' again and again, he did not know how many times. 'Nordslesorgsk Sondagsblad,' the valiant champion of the Danish language, as against the systematical Germanization of an old Danish province, published in May a whole series of articles on Walt Whitman. The sturdy Slesvic peasants know him very well."

F. B. Sanborn contributed strong lines by his Concord friend, Ellery Channing:—

> "Brave be thy heart, O sailor of the world!
> Erect thy vision, strong and resolute.

Let disappointments strike, and leaden days
Visit thee like a snowdrift across flowers ;
Even in a little this rude voyage is done ;
Then heave the time-stained anchor, trim thy sails,
And o'er the bosom of the untrammelled deep
Ride in the heavenly boat and touch near stars."

George William Curtis wished "to join in the tribute to a man who has bravely and quietly walked by his inner light, and who has never quitted his belief, whenever it was his belief, as Emerson says, 'that a pop-gun is a pop-gun, though the ancient and honourable of the earth affirm it to be the crack of doom.'"

John Addington Symonds wrote : "*Leaves of Grass*, which I first read at the age of twenty-five, influenced me more perhaps than any other book has done, except the Bible ; more than Plato, more than Goethe." Helped him in religion, also to fraternize with all classes, and sweetened and brightened his whole life.

There accrued to Walt Whitman from this dinner celebration a canvas bag of coin to the amount of $125.45. When the committee handed him the bag, he said: "Why, this is like a play. The fellow receiving the purse ought to go off into some flourishes. But [waving his hands] we'll omit them." He added that a lady friend of his thought the dinner celebration the "best Quaker racket" she had ever known.

In October, 1889, I had a talk on Whitman with Mrs. Wm. D. O'Connor, on Boston Common. She said that when Whitman was living with them in Washington, at the time of his hospital ministrations, he and O'Connor used to have terrific disputes over the war question. Whitman would come back from his hospital visits and the harrowing scenes of them, and say, "This war must stop !" "But," said O'Connor, "the issues are not settled yet ; slavery is not abolished." "I don't care for the niggers," said Whitman, "in comparison with all this

suffering and the dismemberment of the Union."* This was in the heat of argument, it must be remembered. Whitman's prose and his poetry, and his daily life, show that no one had a greater sympathy for the black man than he. Still, it is possible that his sympathy was gradually developed by the war and its lessons. His attitude and that of Lincoln were identical. And his own grandfather had owned slaves on Long Island.

Tuesday night, April 15, 1890, Whitman rose from a sick-bed, crying,—

"Dangers retreat when boldly they're confronted,"

and went over, hoarse and half blind, to read his "Death of Lincoln" lecture before a gay and crowded audience at the Art Club Rooms, 220 South Broad Street, Philadelphia, under the auspices of the Contemporary Club. He had to be helped and led every step, but his intellectual force, it was noted, was not in the least abated. "The celebration of Lincoln's death," said he, "is no narrow or sectional reminiscence. It belongs to these States in their entirety—not the North only, but the South—perhaps belongs most tenderly and devoutly to the South, of all; for there really this man's birth-stock; there and then his antecedent stamp. Why should I not say that thence his manliest traits, his universality, his canny, easy ways and words upon the surface—his inflexible determination at heart? Have you ever realized it, my friends, that Lincoln, though grafted on the West, is essentially in *personnel* and character a Southern contribution?"

Whitman's seventy-first birthday was observed on May 31, 1890, evening, by a group of some fifty or sixty friends, mostly

* So, in a note on Carlyle's "Shooting Niagara," in his "Democratic Vistas," Whitman admits that he had more than once been in Carlyle's scornful mood, and understood perfectly his love of the strong and his assertions of the right of the best to rule.

young men (one or more ladies), by a dinner at Reisser's, in Philadelphia. Col. Robert G. Ingersoll made the chief speech, *ore rotundo* and impassioned-conversational, lasting about forty minutes. He stood opposite the poet, frequently addressing himself directly to him, and ending each period with "I thank you for that." Whitman himself occasionally interposed a word. The recognition was ample and great, and of astonishing breadth and faith. Walt took occasion to say during the conversation that followed that there were subtler qualities and deeper deeps of intention in *Leaves of Grass* than were generally perceived. The close of all was a cross-talk on immortality between Ingersoll and Whitman,—the latter leaning to hope or absolute certainty, and Ingersoll to doubt and uncertainty. Whitman, in a little talk on this celebration in the Camden *Post* (June 2), said :—

"Physically and mentally, Ingersoll (he had been working all day in New York, talking in court and in his office) is now at his best, like mellowed wine or a just ripe apple ; to the artist sense, too, looks at his best, not merely like a bequeathed Roman bust or fine smooth marble Cicero-head, or even Greek Plato ; for he is modern, and vital, and veined, and American, and (far more than the age knows) justifies us all."

Dr. J. Johnston, of Bolton, England, visited Whitman in the summer of 1890. His pamphlet, printed for private circulation, is naïve and joyously Greek in tone. In his first meeting he found Whitman upstairs, seated and dressed for hot weather, snowy shirt, with collar turned back, exposing his hirsute chest, and his presence breathing the to us familiar affluence of sanity, purity, and magnetism,—magnetism that astonished the Englishman beyond measure. The second interview with Whitman was by the Delaware. He was wheeled there in his chair in the cool of the long July evening, and the doctor met him *en route*.

"As we approached the wharf, he exclaimed, 'How delicious

the air is!' On the wharf he allowed me to photograph himself and Warren (it was almost dusk, and the light unfavourable), after which I sat down on a log of wood beside him, and he talked in the most free and friendly manner for a full hour, facing the golden sunset, with the cool evening breeze blowing around us, and the summer lightning playing on our faces, and the ferry-boats crossing and recrossing the Delaware.

"Soon a small crowd of boys collected on the wharf-edge to fish and talk, which elicited the remark from him that 'That miserable wretch, the mayor of this town, has forbidden the boys to bathe in the river. He thinks there is something objectionable in their stripping off their clothes and jumping into the water.'" Speaking of the war and its scenes, he said, "The memories of the American people are very evanescent." "No man can become truly heroic who is really poor: he must have food, clothing, and shelter, and," he added significantly, "a little money in the bank, too, I think." "Our leading men are not of much account, and never have been, but the average of the people is immense, beyond all history." In the war "my sympathies were aroused to their utmost pitch, and I found that mine were equalled by the doctors'. Oh, how they *did* work and wrestle with death!" Referring to his nurse, "Warry," as his sailor boy, he said that he had been of great service to him when he was at a loss about the names, etc., of the different parts of a ship. In one edition of *Leaves of Grass* he had written, "where the sea-whale swims with her calves;" but, on reading the line to an old whaler, he was told that it was a very exceptional thing for a whale to have more than one calf, so he altered the line in next edition. He had once been under the impression that the Canadian raftsmen used a bugle, but, when he was touring in Canada in company with Dr. Bucke, he found out his mistake, and altered a line in his *Leaves*. "I am very fond of a well-printed book. Your William Blackwood & Sons, of Edinburgh, produce some splendidly

printed works. I think I was intended for an artist; I cannot help stopping to look at the 'how it's done' of any piece of work, be it picture, speech, music, or what not. Ingersoll is a good illustration of what I mean. From my point of view, the main question about his matter is, 'What does it amount to?' But I cannot but admire his manner of giving it utterance,—it is so thoroughly natural and spontaneous, just like a stream of pure water, issuing we know not whence, and flowing along we care not how, only conscious of the fact that it is beautiful all the time." Referring to the wrath which his beautiful lines on the old German Emperor William caused,—

> "To-day with bending head and eyes, thou, too, Columbia,
> Less for the mighty crown laid low in sorrow—less for the Emperor,
> Thy true condolence breathest, sendest out o'er many a salt sea mile,
> Mourning a good old man—a faithful shepherd, patriot,"—

he said, "You know I include kings, queens, emperors, nobles, barons, and the aristocracy generally in my net—excluding nobody and nothing human—and this does not seem to be relished by these narrow-minded folks."

Dr. Johnston afterwards visited John Burroughs. Burroughs told him that he was at one time a member of a "Society of Authors" in New York City, and that they had actually blackballed Whitman! "I've never been inside the doors since that. They would have done themselves infinite honour, had they elected him. *I* didn't propose him, but they showed themselves contemptible little fools by refusing him."

On Oct. 21, 1890, in the Horticultural Hall in Philadelphia (the Broad Street Academy Hall having been scornfully refused on account of Ingersoll's philosophical views), Col. Robert G. Ingersoll delivered to an audience of two thousand persons an elaborate oration on Walt Whitman as man and author. It was a testimonial, and netted the poet some $870. From the eloquent peroration these lines are chosen:—

"As you read the marvellous book, or the person, called

Leaves of Grass, you feel the freedom of the antique world; you hear the voices of the morning, of the first great singers,—voices elemental as those of sea and storm. The horizon enlarges, the heavens grow ample, limitations are forgotten,—the realization of the will, the accomplishment of the ideal, seem to be within your power. . . . In this one book, in these wondrous *Leaves of Grass*, you find hints and suggestions, touches and fragments, of all there is of life, that lies between the babe, whose rounded cheeks dimple beneath his mother's laughing, loving eyes, and the old man, snow-crowned, who, with a smile, extends his hand to death."

Whitman was present, and said a few words of greeting to the audience at the close.

On Nov. 8, 1890, Whitman sent to us at the *Transcript* office, in Boston, for use in the paper, a "jotting" memorandum, anent the then recent sweeping Democratic victory in many States of the Union, which was considered a rebuke of the McKinley Tariff and pension enormities:—

"Walt Whitman likes the result of the late election, and wants more of it. Though an old Republican, he calls the party in power 'the banditti combine,' and says, if it were not for American elections as safety-valves, we should likely have a French Revolution here and Reign of Terror."

About the same time, too, he sent us another jotting:—

"The Epictetus saying, as given by Walt Whitman in his now quite utterly dilapidated physical case—and Whitman is particular about verbalism and even commas [he refers to a fragmentary wording of the sentiment printed shortly before in the same paper]—is 'a little spark of soul dragging a great lummux of corpse body clumsily to and fro around.'"

This pleased him so much that, as a standing notice to his correspondents, he had it printed sidewise on the margin of the squarish fragments of buff paper on which (for his failing eyes' sake, probably) he latterly wrote all his letters.

Christmas Day of 1890 was spent by Walt Whitman in giving himself and all his family a Christmas present for eternity. He went out to Harleigh Cemetery, suburbs of Camden, to select a site for a tomb; chose a place on a woody, laurelled hillside, bird-haunted, with living water near by. There the tomb stands to-day, Etruscan-like in its granite simplicity, with the words WALT WHITMAN carved on the pediment. His father and mother, and brothers and sisters, will sleep beside him. When asked why he chose this spot, he said, "I would rather go in the woods."

"Walt Whitman got out in the mid-April sun and warmth of yesterday, propelled in his wheel-chair, the first time after four months of imprisonment in his sick-room."—*Camden Post*, April 16, 1891.

Whitman's seventy-second birthday (and his last) was celebrated by a few friends who met (May 31, 1891, evening) at his own board in Camden.

Walt opened the talk by drinking, in a glass of champagne, a "reverent memory" to the "mighty comrades that have not long ago passed away,—Bryant, Emerson, Longfellow;" also to Tennyson and Whittier, "a noble old man." (The quoted words are Whitman's, taken from the verbatim report of this little Phædo-like symposium published in *Lippincott's*, August, '91.) More words of his follow:—

"[John Addington] Symonds is a curious fellow. I have never seen him, of course. He has written me many times. I love him dearly. He is of college breed and education—horribly literary and suspicious, and enjoys things. A great fellow for delving into persons and into the concrete, and even into the physiological, the gastric—and wonderfully cute. About every three months he writes me, oh! the most beautiful splendid letters (I dare not show them to anyone hardly)—they are so like those tête-à-tête interviews with your chum, your mate, your comrade. (Warry, go up and get the picture from

my mantelpiece.) He has sent me a good picture, taken in Switzerland, and I want to show you what kind of a person he is."

Some one asked Whitman, during the evening (point-blank almost), why he had never married. His labyrinthine, mystifying reply is very humorous: "The whole thing, my friend, like the Nibelungen, or somebody's cat, has an immensely long, long, long tail to it. And the not being married, and the not, and the not, and the not, and the this, and the this, and the this, have a great many explications. At the first view it may not be so creditable to the fellow; but go on, explicate still more, and still more, and still more behind all that—and after a while you see why it must be so in the nature of things. And that is a splendid explication of Robert Burns. You go behind all, and you realize that no matter what the blame may be to Robert Burns, somehow or other you feel like excusing, and saying that that is the reason why, and that is the reason why, and that is the reason why. See?"

Whitman expressed with feeling and emphasis his belief in the "solidarity of the common people, of all peoples and all races." This idea dwelt much with him even in his last sickness. In one of his last letters, a printed fac-simile of which is before me (the letter was sent to Dr. Johnston, of Bolton, England), he wrote in a trembling hand, "More and more it comes to the fore that the only theory worthy our modern times for great literature, politics, and sociology, must combine all the bulk people of all lands, the women not forgotten." We are "like fellows in a ship," said he at the supper; what "jeopardizes one jeopardizes all. . . . The attempt at what they call 'protection,' and all that goes to boost up and wall up and wall out and protect out, . . . is wrong, and one feeling for all, extreme reciprocity and openness and free-trade-ism, is the policy for me."

Tennyson and Lowell both telegraphed their good wishes for

the occasion. A few weeks later Lowell died, and Whitman sent to the Boston *Herald* (August 13) a note about him :—

CAMDEN, N.J., Aug. 13, 1891.

Let me send my little word, too, to J. R. Lowell's memory. His was the true American's and humanity's heart, in the light of his own convictions; and he wrought it out faithfully. His written pages preserve a certain altitude everywhere. As Emerson says, we are at any rate all beholden to kings and eminences for their grand standard of atmosphere and manners, or suggestion of them.

WALT WHITMAN.

The latter part of May appeared the last booklet issued by Walt Whitman,—"Good-bye my Fancy." As he says, and as he wrote to me, "The *clef* is here changed to its lowest, and the little book is a lot of tremolos about old age, death, faith. The physical just lingers, but almost vanishes. The book is garrulous, irascible (like old Lear), and has various breaks and tricks to avoid monotony."

In May, 1891, also appeared some good memoranda on Whitman in the *New England Magazine* (Boston) by Horace Traubel.

Traubel's recollections date back to '73, when Walt came to Camden to live. His chamber and study were in the third story front of the Stevens Street house, facing the south. "In very hot weather he might have been observed on his way, without coat, vest, or suspenders, distinguished from afar by the glimpse of a spotless white shirt, open always at the throat." Whitman's "prostration arose [as he himself described it] from a poisoned wound in the right hand, received while assisting at the amputation of the gangrened limb of a Virginia Union soldier, to whom he was much attached. Hand and arm inflamed and swelled, the vessels under the skin showing like red snakes running up to the shoulder."

"Whitman," continues Traubel, "likes a handsome page;" always had a noble line or verse ready for a printer's emergency; was patient with the printers and binders, and, when they pleased him, liked to send them little gifts; made all his typographical and literary decisions and plans very leisurely. He often gave his own farewell; if weary, would extend his hand, saying, "Well, good-bye, I am glad you came; when you get back to New York, give my love to the boys," the dismissal accomplished in such a way as not to offend in the least. He used this defence as frankly with distinguished men as with obscure.

In *Lippincott's* for May, '92, Mr. W. H. Garrison gives a few glimpses of Whitman. The poet said to him that the first time he ever had a desire to write anything enduring was when he saw a ship under full sail. He tried to describe it exactly, and failed; had often since studied ships in the vain hope of getting the whole beautiful story in words, but had never been able to do so. He had, however, he thought, put the idea of the locomotive into words to which he could add nothing further.

Mr. Garrison is mistaken as to Whitman's knowledge of French. It was only fragmentary, for he had to apply to Dr. Bucke and myself to translate for him a magazine article by Gabriel Sarrazin.

"I have known Whitman," says Mr. Garrison, "to sit at a dinner-table for the best part of an evening without opening his lips, and suddenly to warm into a theme on which he spoke fluently and without interruption for a half-hour or more." This is the experience of others also who have been with him on these occasions.

In Camden it was his custom occasionally to get his little bits of newspaper contributions set up in "a quaint old printing establishment" in the town, and then send out this corrected and revised printed copy to its destination.

His nickname, "Walt," he told Mr. Garrison, he received from the old Broadway 'bus drivers of New York City, whom he knew well, and liked. The 'bus drivers, however, were not the first to so call him; for his brother George tells us that he was so called at home when a boy. Says George, "Walt was called 'Walt' probably because father was Walter. It was a way we had of separating them. He liked 'Walt' and stuck to it."*

About Dec. 20, 1891, Walt Whitman was taken very seriously ill, and it was telegraphed over the country and abroad that he was dying. So he was; but the end was not to come until March 26, nearly four months later. In December his physicians, Doctors Longacre and McAllister, found his right lung entirely gone, as well as two-thirds of the left. The heart was the strongest organ. He knew that he was dying, but never a murmur escaped him. Visitors were strictly excluded—even his own brother George, who called to see him. On Christmas Day he was told he could not outlive the night. "We will fool these doctors yet," was his cheery response. Dr. Bucke, his close Canadian friend, had been on to see him, but went back on the 28th of December, on which day Walt Whitman was feeling better, and had eaten a small mutton chop. He once said he was tired waiting. Afterwards a few visitors were admitted to see him. The New York *Evening Telegram* got up a fund, the object of which was to furnish, daily, fresh flowers for his sick-room. January 14 he was sending out a few gift copies of his latest, '92, complete edition of *Leaves of Grass*, in rustic manilla covers, with pretty buff label. Thus the brave and defiant little flag of poetry, inscribed with the gospel of humanity, which had been run up "on Atlantica's rim" thirty-seven years before, still floated over the old bard's dying couch. January 18 he was sitting up in bed,

* *In Re* Walt Whitman, p. 35.

reading one of the magazines. February 6 he wrote to English friends, "Deadly weak yet, but the spark seems to glimmer." March 4 Horace Traubel wrote me that he was suffering deeply, but a beautiful spirit shining through all, "he content that things should be as they are." They had rigged up a call-bell for him, the cord hanging just over his hand; toward the end transferred him to a water-bed, which gave him considerable relief. His writing materials (blue and other coloured pencils, etc.) were within reach of his hand all through his last illness.

The grip and pneumonia were the indirect cause of his death, though the doctors, about the middle of January, pronounced him cured of the latter. Yet his strength did not return. He partook at times of milk punch, toast, eggs, oysters, champagne, and occasionally bits of meat. For three days before his death, however, he would take no nourishment beyond a sip now and then of milk punch. On the day he died, Saturday, March 26, 1892, he said to his housekeeper, "Leave me alone, Mary, I cannot eat." At 4.30 in the afternoon he began to fail; Dr. McAllister arrived at 5.45, and saw that he was dying. When he asked him if he suffered pain, he faintly whispered, "No." Present were Thos. B. Harned, Horace Traubel, Mrs. Davis, and the nurses. About twenty minutes before his death he whispered to his nurse, "Warry, shift," the pain in his side leading him to wish to be turned over. Suddenly, as he reached for his handkerchief, respiration ceased, although the heart, a very strong organ with him, beat for ten minutes thereafter.

His end was such as he had prayed for :—

"At the last, tenderly,
From the walls of the powerful fortress'd house,
From the clasp of the knitted locks, from the keep of the well-closed doors,
Let me be wafted."

The news of his death was cabled to his friends, Tennyson, Dr. Bucke, and others. On the following day a plaster cast of his face was taken. The post-mortem revealed that the lungs and all the important organs were infested with tubercles. Less than one-eighth of the lung tissue was available for breathing purposes. A large gall-stone was found (it had caused him great agony), and in the vermiform appendage were two small calculi. As a result of a sunstroke, the membrane of the brain was found adhering to the skull for a small space at top of cranium. "The brain, however, was normal, and this had not affected its functions."

Editorials on the poet appeared in all the great dailies of New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, London, and Edinburgh. Indeed, his friends were surprised at the deep affection revealed by these profuse voices of praise and sorrow.

Thus died Walt Whitman, noble to the end. And these words in the quaint old German tongue kept ringing in my ears :—

> "Eine Freiheitsharfe ist verklungen,
> Die einst stürmisch an die Herzen drang,
> Denn der donnergleich zu ihr gesungen,
> Ach, der Barde hat das Ziel errungen,
> Nur als Nachhall tönt sein Sturmgesang!"

Whitman's burial was that of a philosopher, and was nobly arranged. The Methodist funeral that relatives had planned, his friends luckily had power to prevent. Not a shred of superstition nor of conventional funeral exercises, nor of lugubrious mummery, marred the event. The only exercises were orations by friends in a great palm-decorated tent at the tomb, and the reading there of a few selections from the Bibles of the world, including *Leaves of Grass*.

Over three thousand people filed through the little parlour where, in its oaken coffin, dressed in gray-brown clothes (white turned-up cuffs and snowy open collar) lay the mask of Walt

Whitman. The little room was half filled with wreaths, palm branches, etc., sent from different cities. Scholars and writers, such as Brinton, Burroughs, Conway, and Furness, jostled big burly policemen and little children of the humble classes. All loved him well; to all his life had been an inspiration. As we lifted the coffin into the death-waggon, I noticed that the street, for half a block each side, was filled with a great multitude of people. At the cemetery hundreds of people were wedged in two compact and struggling lines at the entrance to the tomb, filing in and out to see the very spot (the inner crypt) where the body was to lie, and thousands sat on the hillside about the tomb, and made no attempt to hear Col. Robert G. Ingersoll deliver his beautiful poem-oration in the tent: they came out of love of Walt, their brother. And so perhaps did the first blue-bird of spring, that alighted on the tiptop spray of the tree above the tomb, and uttered his plaintive-sweet warble. This little unbidden musician's fresh, delicious notes—a trembling prelude and hint of springing life and immortality—formed the only music, but ideally fitting music, for Walt Whitman's death. There was a strange feeling of exultation, almost joy, in the hearts of all these people (mingled with grief). They felt as Dr. Bucke said on meeting Col. Ingersoll, "We are at the summit,"—at the summit of a good man's life—his triumphant death. For my part, I felt as if I had been at the entombment of Christ, and that I could never again receive an honour greater than that of having been one of the six acting pall-bearers at Walt Whitman's funeral. His death was a kind of triumph, apotheosis, ovation. And one was scarcely surprised to hear that some days after the interment the hill was found almost denuded of plants, vines, and branches of laurel by his passionate lovers.

Listen to a few words of Ingersoll's funeral oration, uttered with voice choked with emotion (as was also that of Dr. Bucke in his beautifully simple oration):—

"A great man, a great American, the most eminent citizen of this Republic, lies dead before us, and we have met to pay a tribute to his greatness and his worth.

"He came into our generation a free, untrammeled spirit, with sympathy for all. His arm was beneath the form of the sick. He sympathized with the imprisoned and despised, and even on the brow of crime he was great enough to place the kiss of human sympathy.

"One of the greatest lines in our literature is his, and the line is great enough to do honour to the greatest genius that has ever lived. He said, speaking of an outcast, 'Not till the sun excludes you do I exclude you.'

"His charity was as wide as the sky, and wherever there was human suffering, human misfortune, the sympathy of Whitman bent above it as the firmament bends above the earth. . . .

"He has lived, he has died, and death is less terrible than it was before. Thousands and millions will walk down into the 'dark valley of the shadow' holding Walt Whitman by the hand. Long after we are dead the brave words he has spoken will sound like trumpets to the dying.

"And so I lay this little wreath upon this great man's tomb. I loved him living, and I love him still."

By his will, Walt Whitman left his property—some $5,000, not counting his copyrights—to his two sisters and his brother, Edward L. Whitman, a helpless and mentally incapacitated member of the family. The full text of the will is given in an appendix. For, although it deals with the private family life, it is of literary value, and throws curious side-lights on the poet's character. He had a tremendous practicality and love of property, inherited from his Dutch-English ancestors; yet, what he saved, he saved to do good with. What he received from his admirers was but a paltry proportion of the debt they owed him. If Tennyson and Longfellow found literature the

source of fortune, *a fortiori* ought Walt Whitman so to have found it. If he had died worth a hundred thousand or three hundred thousand dollars, it would have been justly his. No *money* can pay the debt lovers of Whitman feel for the man who has so ennobled their souls.

Whitman's birthday was celebrated both in Philadelphia and Boston about two months after he died. It came on May 31, and on that day a few Boston friends of the poet came out to my house in Belmont for an open-air walk and talk—Mr. F. B. Sanborn, Judge Mellen Chamberlain, Mrs. Charles Fairchild, Miss Elizabeth Porter Gould, Sylvester Baxter, Joseph E. Chamberlain of the Boston *Transcript*, and others. Morse's bust of Whitman crowned with myrtle stood inside the door. We sat on the veranda overlooking the distant city, and had a good talk. Mr. Sanborn said that in 1860, when he was before Justice Shaw in the Old Court House in Boston (to show cause why he refused to be kidnapped by the central government for participation in the John Brown raid), he noticed a distinguished-looking man, in peculiar dress, near the door. This he learned was Walt Whitman, who afterwards told him that he had come to see that justice was done him in case the court should not decide right; for in that case a plan had been formed to rescue Sanborn.

Walt Whitman's letters and postal-cards to me cover a period ranging from Feb. 25, 1881, to Sept. 22, 1891, and number between two and three hundred in all. In December, '81, he sent me a Christmas present of his books (some rare editions, how prized and how welcome!) in response to an enthusiastic article about him I had written in the open air in the meadows of Concord. From that time on his letters came pretty regularly. They are all, with one or two exceptions, dated Camden, New Jersey. Following are extracts :—

April 13, 1883, Afternoon.

Your "Holmes" rec'd. Thanks for your brief, flashing, indirect glances on me—not so indirect either. . . . Dr. R. M. Bucke of Canada has just finished the printing (type-setting) of his book "Walt Whitman"—to be published here about end of this month by David McKay. Have had a pretty good winter.

May 31, '83.

I don't think you appreciate the importance of that article of yours (statement, position, signal for advance, etc.) in the *Critic* ["The Precession of the Poets"]. It entails on you deep responsibilities, and great wariness and determination in keeping it up.

328 Mickle St., Aug. 5 [1885].

I had a sunstroke two weeks ago—makes me weak since (legs and bones like gelatine)—but I guess I am recuperating.

Aug. 10, '85, Noon.

Pleasant weather as I write seated here and my little canary bird singing away like mad.

Sept. 16 ['86].

Have been reading Cowley—well pleased.

Oct. 16, '86.

Yours of the 14th rec'd by mid-day mail. *Good roots* (as the N. Y. boys used to say) to your venture! . . . My canary is singing blithely as I write.

Dec. 12, '86.

Have had a bad spell of illness again, but am better to-day. Have just eaten a bit of dinner for the first time in over a week—stewed rabbit with a piece of splendid home-made bread covered with the stew gravy. Everything from you rec'd and welcomed. Dull weather, the ground covered with snow —(but my little bird is singing as I write).

In August, 1886, he wrote to me :—

"The writers in the New York *Tribune*—Bayard Taylor, Ripley, Whitelaw Reid, and little Willy Winter—have been the most malignant and persistent enemies of W. W. and L. of G. from the beginning and throughout." About the same time he wrote anent Jay C. Goldsmith's ["Jay Charlton"] sketch originally published in the *Danbury News* and afterwards in William Shepard's "Pen Pictures of Modern Authors": "Camden, Aug. 5, '86—I have looked over the Jay Charlton piece, and it is the silliest compound of nonsense, lies and rot I have ever seen—Not a line but has an absurd lie—The paper of Conway [published in the *Fortnightly* in 1866] is not much better."

Dec. 28, '86.

Have a Tennyson *blaat* [*blatt* (Ger.) or *blad* (Dutch)?] in the forthcoming *Critic*. Happy New Year!

Feb. 21, '87, P.M.

Dear W. S. K. . . . Thanks for your warm words, your affectionate personal and literary extra appreciation—always thanks for writing and sending. I am kept in here quite all the time and was glad you sent Rhys's letters. He makes the impression on me of a deep true friend of L. of G. and of me. Poor dear noble O'Connor's ailment is I fear *locomotor ataxia*—induration of the spine.

The following letter is one of several written to John Burroughs, Dr. Bucke, and myself; Walt sending first to me, with request to forward to Burroughs, and "J. B. please forward to Dr. Bucke," still further west.

Camden, Feb. 25, '87, P.M.

Am sitting here by the window in the little front room down stairs well wrapt up—for though bright and sunny it is a cold

freezing day. Have had my dinner (of rare stewed oysters, some toasted Graham bread and a cup of tea—relished all). Am about as usual—ups and downs—had a rather bad day yesterday, lay on the lounge most of the time—now better. The worst is my enforced house-imprisonment, sometimes two weeks at a time. Spirits and heart though mainly gay, which is the best part of the battle. Love and comfort to you, my friends —your wives and all. Write often as you can (monotony is now the word of my life).

Whitman was quite annoyed at the report spread abroad once that he was starving: hence the frequent references in his letters after that to his food,—what he had for dinner, etc., as in the following. Another explanation of these allusions is found in the circumstance that in the last few years he was an invalid (in body), and had continually serious gastric troubles; could eat only the most easily digested food:—

March 1, '87.

Dear W. S. K.—Your letter of Sunday has come, and I am glad to get those impromptu well-filled yellow sheets. *Write again.* I have not heard any more from O'Connor—when I do I will tell you. I write or send [him] papers or something every day. [O'C. was then in California for his health.] Have just had my dinner—a great piece of toasted Graham bread salted and well buttered with fresh country butter, and then a lot of good panned oysters dumped over it, with the hot broth—then a nice cup custard and a cup of coffee. So if you see in the paper that I am starving (as I saw it the other day) understand how.

March 10, '87.

Yours came this morning with extract from [Robert] Buchanan's book. Thank you truly, such things are more help to me than you think. . . . Have just sent off two

sets of 1876 ed'n [of *Leaves of Grass*] to John Hay, of Washington, at his request.

April 11, '87, Noon.

Dear friend—I expect to go on to New York to speak my "Death of Lincoln" piece Thursday afternoon next. Probably the shake-up will do me good. . . . Sunny and summery weather here, and my canary is singing like a house a-fire.

April 21, '87.

I go over this afternoon at urgent request of my friend R. P[earsall] Smith ["one of my kindest friends"] to some quarters in Arch street provided for me, where I believe I am to be sculp'd by St. Gaudens. [This was written on the back of a letter from Chas. W. Eldridge, of Los Angeles, in which he says, "Dr. Channing gives himself almost entirely up to William's [William Douglas O'Connor] care and treatment. They sleep in a tent together in the middle of the garden. . . . William's blood boiled at the covert malignancy displayed by [T. W.] Higginson in his [Harper's] *Bazar* articles. He said, 'It is fortunate for Higginson that I am sick.'"]

April 27, '87.

Drove down yesterday four miles to "Billy Thompson's" on the Delaware river edge to a nice dinner—baked shad and champagne galore—enjoyed all with moderation. No, the Mr. Smith, my liberal and faithful Quaker friend, is R. Pearsall Smith (glass manufacturer and man of wealth), father of Mrs. [Mary] Costelloe, my staunchest living woman friend. [The Smiths' summer residence is in Surrey, with the Tennysons as their near neighbors; and both they and Dr. R. M. Bucke have been cordially welcomed by the Tennysons when presenting letters of introduction from Walt Whitman. Mr. Costelloe is or was a member of the London Council. Young Logan Smith

sold at one time at Oxford sixty dollars' worth of books for Walt.]

The next letter is anent the summer cottage plan :—

June 3, P.M. ['87].

Thanks—best and joyfullest thanks to you and Baxter and all. I will write to you to-morrow (or next day) after thinking it over a bit and tell you detailedly. At present I have not settled on spot, but am filled with gratitude and pleasure at the prospect of having a country (or perhaps sea-shore) shanty of my own.

Monday Morning, June 13, '87.

Yours of the 11th just rec'd—it is a fine bright morning, just the right temperature—I am feeling better to-day—freer (almost free) of the heavy congested condition (especially the head department) that has been upon me for nearly a week. Have been living much on strawberries of late. . . . I wish you fellows (Baxter, yourself, etc.) to leave the selection, arrangement, disposal, etc., of the cottage (where, how, etc.) *to me.* The whole thing is something I am making much reckoning of—more probably than you all are aware. The amount shall be put of course to that definite single purpose. And *there* I shall probably mainly live the rest of my days. Oh how I want to get amid good air !—the air is so tainted here—five or six months in the year at best.

July, 9 P. M. ['87].

—— is certainly crazy, a cross between Zedenko (in "Consuelo") and something more intellectual and infernal. [This of a bore of an admirer, an eccentric fellow who pestered him with questions and criticisms.] Very hot weather here continued. I am feeling it badly—yet not so badly as you might fancy. I am careful, and Mrs. Davis is very good and cute. As I write it is clouded over and begins to rain. H[erbert] G[ilchrist] is still here painting. [Sidney] Morse here.

July 11, '87.

I went off yesterday on a ten-mile drive to Glendale, to my friends the Staffords' house, where I staid five hours, and back in the drape of the day—a ride and all which I enjoyed greatly . . . Two wealthy English girls, Bessie and Isabella Ford, have just sent me £20.

July 13, '87.

I enclose my last little piece ["The Dying Veteran"]—a slip copy. A New York newspaper syndicate (S. S. McClure, *Tribune* Building) vehemently solicited and gave me $25 (far more than it is worth). Then I have sent a three-line piece, "Twilight," to the *Century*, which they accepted, and paid for ($10) . . . As I close everything is faint and still with the heat.

July 17, '87.

Heat, heat, heat, night and day. I find evening a great relief—have passed great part of to-day lying on the lounge, with a big palm-leaf fan.

July 28, '87.

Had for dinner stewed blackberries—a favorite tipple of mine—and boiled rice. . . . Sidney Morse has made a second big head [bust]—an improvement, if I dare say so, on the first. The second is the modern spirit, awake and alert—as well as calm—contrasted with the antique and Egyptian calmness and rest of the first. We have decided on the second.

Aug. 30, '87.

I remain anchor'd here in my big chair. Have you read the Bacon-Shakspere résumé in the last Sunday's New York *World?* I am tackling it—take less and less stock in it. [He changed his mind later, and I heard him in company once stoutly maintain his belief in the Baconian theory, or at least that Shakspere was not the author of the plays.]

Sept. 7, Evening.

I return [John Addington] S[ymonds]'s letter. All I can say about it is I myself like to get views from every quarter—then I go on the tack that seems *to me* rightest. As I write it is clouding up dark for a thunderstorm.

Sept. 14, '87.

I am about as usual—have just had my dinner—a slice of cold roast beef and a couple of cooked apples, which I ate with relish. . . . Nothing very new with me in literary matters —or anent—I sent a little poem to *Harper's* (Alden)—but it came back, refused. This is the fourth refusal within a few months, and I shall try no more. Philadelphia is all alive with the Centennial U. S. Constitutional commemoration, and will be thro' this week. I have been pressingly invited, but cannot go; a crowd and a hubbub are no place for me. . . . I enclose J. A. S.'s note (rather flat, it seems to me).

Tues., P. M. [Oct. 4, '87].

Hear from Dr. Bucke frequently; he always writes me cheerily and chipper, which I like, for it is pretty monotonous here. I return Symonds's letter herewith. The whole matter —this letter and the *Fortnightly* note [by him]—seems to me funny.

> "Perhaps there may be bairns, kind sir,
> Perhaps there may be *not.*"

[The reference is to a rather half-hearted defence of Whitman by Symonds, in the *Contemporary*, September, 1887. Symonds wrote to me that he himself was not at all satisfied with the fragmentary expression.]

Nov. 17, '87.

[Speaking of Sidney Morse's second bust, he writes]—I am quite clear *this* is the typical one, modern, reaching out, looking ahead, democratic, more touch of animation, unsettledness, etc., etc.—not intended to be polished off, left purposely a little in

the rough. I send you by mail to Belmont the Cox photograph. . . . I expressed the plaster head to you last evening.

Jan. 10, '88.

After a dark storm (with snow) nearly a week, the sun is out this afternoon and there is a half-thaw. My friend, Pearsall Smith (who is very kind all along), was here yesterday, and bro't a great bundle of London literary weeklies, etc., which I have been looking over—I like the advertisement pages ab't as well as any. I suppose Ernest Rhys is there with you.

March 15, '88.

I still write bits for the [New York] *Herald*—they pay me quite well, and then it is a sort of spur or filip.

March 20, '88.

Get lots of invitations, applications, etc., every week. (Oh, what lots of letters for autographs!)—Frequent visitors—sometimes angels unawares. Invites to swell dinners (or societies, etc.) invariably declined.—Am idle and monotonous enough in my weeks and life here; but on the whole am thankful it is no worse. My buying this shanty and settling down here on half or one fourth pay, and getting Mrs. D[avis] to cook for me, *might* have been bettered by my disposing some other way; but I am satisfied it is all as well as it is—and whatever happens I still jog away at the *Herald* bits. I enclose Mary Costelloe's letter just rec'd. Isn't it cheery? [In another letter he says] —All the little *Herald* pieces will appear (with misprints corrected) in *November Boughs*.

March 26, '88.

Give the proofs of your book a good searching reading, for, with Dr. Bucke's book, they are to be in all probability the vignette and authority of many things in my and my work's future—the backward and contemporary reference. . . . I

begin my 70th year now in about two months—thank God indeed that things are as well as they are, and that I and my fortunes (literary and otherwise) are.

May 7, '88.

I still write a little, but almost hate to, not wanting to tack on lethargy and indigestion to what I have already uttered.

June 14, '88.

[Apropos of his paralytic stroke]—Without any doubt I am on the gain. The last three hours I am up and shall probably work back before long as I was before. Five days ago my life was not worth a dime—but what will [not] good doctors do?—The great determined heroes of humanity are the best doctors.

June 26, '88.

The roses came by the mid-day mail, and have been enjoyed hours and hours. The doctors say I certainly do not lose hold. . . . Sitting up this moment and comfortable.

July 11, '88.

The flowers rec'd this day, perfumed and delicious—before me this moment—thanks to dear Mrs. K.—pretty sick yet, but shall rally.

Sept. 1, '88.

Dear W. S. K.—Yours came right. I am still imprisoned in my sick room, yet sitting up and reading and writing, (in limits) talking and being talked to. . . . I do not want anything, comfort or necessity, I crave for. Traubel is unspeakably faithful and kind.

Sunday Afternoon, Oct. 7, '88.

Curiously monotonous with me. I am still kept in the same sick room, unable to get out, even down stairs—don't seem to retrograde in some main respects, but little or no strength or the vim and go that underlie all going or doing.—John

Burroughs has been to see me, the dear good fellow; I was glad to have him, and his talk did me good. . . . I had a letter day before yesterday from O'Connor—he has great trouble with an affection of the eyes—one lid remains fallen, and the other eye sympathises with it.

Friday Evening, Oct. 19, '88.

It is dark and I have had my dinner and am sitting by the fire and gaslight—anchor'd and tied in my old big democratic chair and room, the same as all summer, now in the fall, and soon the long winter and (if I live) probably through all—I have been occupied most of the afternoon writing my autographs—there are to be 600 for the edition of my complete writings—it will be ab't 900 pages, and include *all*—a few (?) last revisions (no changes at all, but a few misprints, brokennesses and errors corrected,—will be an *authenticated* ed'n—you shall have one. Have been reading Ellis's "Early English Metrical Romances" (Bohn's ed'n)—Miss Pardoe's Louis XIV., and several Carlyle books, including Mrs. C.'s letters—Symonds's "Greek Poets," etc. Upon the whole get along and baffle lonesomeness and the blues. God bless you and the wife.

Thursday, Noon, Oct. 25, '88.

First thank you for your good affectionate letter, inspiriting more than you know.—That seems to me too long, condensed, dwelling a pull—proof-reading work—pressing work, too, on the *delication* of the brain. I had a friend—a woman of thirty, a *counter* in the Redemption Bureau in the Treasury—told me she was "going to the devil fast and steady" (her own description) from the dense, brain-exhausting, dulling labors, till she adopted the plan of getting a ten or twelve minutes' nap (sleep—or even doze) at noon or one o'clock every day,—just leaning down at her desk—fortunately she could fall into a nap (which is the great part of it); at any rate it cured. I heard from Bucke to-day; he sends me the enclosed little slip from O'Connor.

[O'Connor says, pathetically, "A month ago my right eye closed, and the lid has not yet lifted, spite of battery. So I am practically blind, seeing only a little with the left eye. Too bad. Paralysis of the eyelid."] The condition is bad, and I feel pretty gloomy about my best friend. . . . My sister (George's wife) has just paid me a good cheery visit, with some nice home-made Graham biscuits. So I get along well, am comfortable, have a fair appetite, and keep a good oak fire.—Love.

Camden, Night, Dec. 3, '88.

[Joint letter to Burroughs, O'Connor, Bucke, and Kennedy; written on circular of "November Boughs," published by Alexander Gardner, of Paisley, Scotland.]

This is the title-page of a small ed'n of *Nov: B.* in Scotland, I tho't might amuse you. My physical trouble has veer'd quite entirely lately, or (more truly) added to, and is now that senile botheration from prostate or enlarged, or inflam'd gland (bladder business, diabetes) or other worse or less form of ailment. Dr. Osler was here this afternoon, and is to bring over a surgeon on the 5th, P.M., for more concise examination. It has resulted the last four nights in quite no sleep, which is a very bad factor in my complication.—Have succeeded in a cheap and initiatory dress (binding) for the big book (trilogy, the proof-reader at the office calls it) which I am now only waiting the at present hard-pressed binders to achieve and put in form, and I will send you one—each of you dear ones—for Christmas, and much good may it do you. The more elaborated court dress with frills yet waits before desperate vacancy and uncertainty.

Dec. 4, 10 A.M.

A fair night, this last, and fair sleep. The gland suffering, or whatever it is (the distressing recurrent stricture-like spasms, ab't from three to ten minutes almost continuously, the last five days and nights) has let up. . . . Ed. Wilkins

—my young Kanuck, my nurse and helper Dr. B. sent—has just come in to tell me the result of an errand—and so monotonously my thread winds on.

Jan. 5, '89.

Hearty thanks for your services in conveying the books [he expressed to me a big package of the "big books"—half a dozen—for Mr. Sanborn, Mrs. Elizabeth Fairchild (a lady, by the way, brought up in the atmosphere of Concord), Hamlin Garland, Sylvester Baxter, etc.] Baxter's splendid notice and setting forth of the book, in *Herald* of last Thursday, is rec'd and seems to me the most complete and most friendly and penetrating (from the point of view of an absorber, believer and democrat) I have ever had. . . . Have read Tolstoï and (it seems to me) all Carlyle's letters—and have enough.

Jan. 28, '89.

Your letter and the translation [of an article by Sarrazin I made for him ; and the old scamp printed it without asking my leave !] have come and I thank you markedly. I have sent M. Sarrazin (his piece is a great steady trade-wind hurrying the ship into port) a copy of the big book. . . . Dr. Bucke makes a little fun of Howells's notice of *Nov: Boughs* in Feb. *Harper's* (the wonder is that it is so friendly and good). . . . I sit up all day and read and write (tho' both are getting almost loathsome), and keep fair spirits upon the whole.

Feb. 1, '89.

I get along here without any luxury or any special *order*, but I am satisfied and comfortable, and often bless the Lord and congratulate myself that things are as well with me as they are—that I retain my mentality intact—that I have put my literary stuff in final form—that I have a few (but sufficient) real and competent and determined advocates and understanders and bequeathers (important as much as anything)

. . . I write a few lines every two or three days to O'Connor and send Mrs. O'Connor the *Transcripts*.

Feb. 11, '89.

O'Connor is badly off—worse—and I am much worried ab't him. He is laid up, mainly bed-fast, in his house. . . . Pray you, don't mind any little proof-lapses in the S[arrazin] translation (if any)—it is a wonderfully *consoling* piece to me—coming from so evidently a fully equipt, sharp-eyed, sharp-nosed, sharp-ear'd Parisian Frenchman—running the critical leads the very deepest.

Feb. 25, '89.

I send the little German translation [Grashalme] from Zurich. At your leisure, give me a sort of English abstract of Knortz's and Rolleston's prefaces in front.

March 20, '89.

The *Saturday Review* (March 2) has a rather curious hot and cold, I would but dare not, sort of notice of *Nov: B.* and of me in which O'C. and Dr. B.'s names are toss'd about superficially and with attempted sarcasm (you are invited to see what *you* may be destined to). I sympathize, too, with Mr. and Mrs. Sanborn. I count on Burroughs coming out from his hole yet. Lawyer Harned and wife have just called on me—both welcome (they have fine children and sometimes bring them). I am sitting here yet as one held by a heavy chain or coil.

April 8, '89.

[Health.] The pegs are gradually loosening, perhaps being slowly pulled out. I have been kept in here now almost a year (not been out-doors once in that time—hardly out of the sick-room.) . . . Had lots of doctors, but they have all vanished. Am busying myself with a new ed'n of L. of G. [the pocket edition]. . . . Writing this on the tablet on my lap. . . . Love and good prospects to all.

May 4, '89.

Did you see that infernal farrago of my *opinions ! !* in the [N. Y.] *Herald* three Sundays ago by that Japanee ? [Sadakichi Hartmann].

May 8, '89.

Horace [Traubel] and my nurse Ed. have gone prospecting to Phila: for a strong suitable *out-door chair* for me to be pull'd or push'd out. [Wheeled chair bought.]

May 10, '89.

Our dear friend O'Connor died peacefully yesterday at 2 A.M.

WALT WHITMAN.

May 13, '89.

Our friend has no doubt been buried by this—his death hour was peaceful. I think he must have been unconscious for a good while previous. The face and all looked peaceful and beautiful in death. Traubel has sent a short piece about him to the *Critic*. I will send you (or word of) all I hear or get. I have been out to-day noon in wheel chair to the river shore as secluded as I could find and staid over half an hour.

May 29, '89.

Have just been curried and massaged.

Sept. 7, '89.

Sarrazgin's book seems to be *the most determined blow* we have had happen to us yet.

Sept. 14, '89.

The sun out this afternoon here after a week's absence and heavy storms.

Sept. 30, '89.

A Unitarian minister to see me yesterday—they all come here.

Oct. 10, '89.

The sense of Manahatta is *the place around which the hurried (or feverish) waters are continually coming or whence they are going.*

Oct. 17, '89.

Thanks for the nice currants (I have had some for my breakfast) and the good little calamus confectionery by mail. Thanks to the dear Western girl. Sunshiny here to-day.

Jan. 27, '90.

I sit here the same as ever alone, mostly in the great chair—two massages or pummellings—and two meals, breakfast and supper, no dinner—those four the main breaks of the day. . . . Lord bless you all.

Feb. 10, '90.

Am writing a little—bits, poemets, etc.—I suppose to while away time as much as anything else. Hawsered here by pretty short rope . . . My young nurse is down stairs learning his fiddle lesson. Sun shining out to-day.

April 1, '90.

Fine sunny day and clear evening after snow-storm. I have the grip at last and badly.—April 11. Still the grip day and night—sometimes most strangles me. I fight it as if a great serpent—worst late at night. Astonishing what one can stand when put to one's trumps.

June 18, '90.

Did I tell you my last piece (poem) was rejected by the *Century* (R. W. Gilder)? I have now been shut off by *all* the Magazines here and the *Nineteenth Century* in England—and feel like closing house as poem writer (you know a fellow doesn't make brooms or shoes if nobody will have 'em).

July 2, '90.

Have seen your piece sent to H[orace Traubel's "Conservator"] on my *Quaker Traits;* and I like it, and the statistics are right. . . . The *Transcript* comes promptly and I always read it.

Aug. 2, '90.

Don't know of [my grandmother Amy] *Williams* having any mark'd Welsh blood—never heard ab't that. One of the stock names on the women's (Williams') side was Kossabone (doubtless Causabone)—Jenny Kossabone my great-grandmother, mother's side. [See his poem on "Old Salt Kossabone."]

Aug. 4, '90.

Bathe often and live on bread and honey, get out in wheel chair at sunset and after—get to the Delaware shore as before—the last two evenings have enjoyed steady damp cool S.W. breezes, very refreshing. . . . If you see Baxter tell him I have read his note and entirely repudiate [Sadikichi] Hartmann's W. W. opinions—they are utterly fraudulent.

Camden, Noon, Aug. 8, '90.

Y'rs of the 6th just comes (are you not a little *blue* ?—it's no use—one has to obey orders and do duty and face the music till he gets formal dismissal—and may as well *come up to the scratch smiling*)—I am still getting along thro' the hot season—have things pretty favourable here in my shanty, with ventilation (night and day), frequent bathing, light meals and *laissez faire* [spelled by Whitman *laissaiz faire*], all which makes it better for me in my utterly helpless condition to tug it out here in Mickle Street than transfer myself somewhere to sea-shore or mountain. It is not for a long time anyhow—then Elias Hicks's saying to my father, "Walter, it is not so much *where* thee lives, but *how* thee lives." [Blank's] new vols: are deep, heavy, bookish, infer not things or thoughts at first hand but at third or fourth

hand, and after the college point of view. The essays are valuable, but appear to me to be elderly chestnuts, mainly. Horace is preparing an article about me for *New England Magazine.* I make dabs with the little 2d Annex and licking it in shape.

Aug. 22, '90.

Am anchor'd helpless here all day, but get along fairly—fortunately have a placid, quiet, even solitary thread quite strong in the weft of my disposition.

Aug. 27, '90.

Writing a little—presents of fruit. . . . Have just sold fifty copies folded in sheets (unbound) the big book (complete works) $3 each—which quite sets me up . . . Quite a good run of visitors, talkers, etc: street cries, hucksters, etc: some fine little children come—letters lots, some queer enough—occasionally one yet from former war soldiers (one yesterday from California). . . . There, I believe I have babbled enough. Love to you and frau.

Sept. 16, '90.

Another letter from Symonds. (I think there's something first-class in him).

Sept. 19, '90.

A basket of nice Seckel pears just rec'd (Prof. Cattell, Penn. Univ.:), sweet and juicy.

Oct. 12, '91.

The Ingersoll lecture (*Liberty and Literature*) is to come off evening Oct. 21, a week from next Tuesday, in Horticultural Hall, Phila. I shall go and show myself and say publicly a word or so (as I wish to definitely show my identification, sympathy and gratitude, and there has been some dodging and perhaps cowardice). [One hall had been scornfully refused for the "infidel" lecturer.]

Oct. 29, '90.

The Ingersoll lecture produced me $867,45. . . . We have (Mrs. Davis has) just had a baking; oh, how I wish I could send the dear frau one of our nice pumpkin pies—(a very little ginger, no other spice). . . . Still have the grip badly.

Nov. 8, '90.

Was out in the wheel chair yesterday 12 to 2½. Went to the north point shore of the city—Cooper's Point, they call it. Saw (almost gloatingly) the most beautiful just finished large four-masted schooner I ever saw sitting like a duck on the water. There, thought I, is indeed a poem.

Jan. 13, '91.

Yr and frau's nice box of plums and ginger candy came right and have done me and lots of *other children* great good.

Jan. 20, '90.

Am badly under the weather and have been ten days and nights. The main abutments and dykes are shattered and threaten to give out—we will see.

Jan. 21.

Badly enough physically—head, belly and bladder matters all in bad way.

Feb. 11, '91.

Send you a couple of slips of [your article] the Dutch piece. *I like it well.* It is the best thing of its kind yet. I have added a few trivialities.

Feb. 6, '91.

Horrible heavy inertia lassitude.

Feb. 16.

Terrible headache.

Feb. 26.

Depress'd bad condition, how it is going to end doubtful.

March 16.

Obstinate long continued horrible indigestion—base of all, parent of most all physical harm.

May 5, '91.

Was taken out to the cemetery (Harleigh) to see if I was satisfied with the work on my burial place. Entirely so—you will see it one day.

July 7, '91, *Noon.*

Just refreshed by a mug of iced buttermilk this hot day. Warry got me up and dressed and has gone off to N.Y. to see Dr. Bucke. (W. returns this evening.) Dr. B. goes over in the Britannic 7½ P.M. July 8 to be gone till end of Aug:—will go to see Tennyson—will see a cluster of L. of G. friends in Bolton, Lancashire (Dr. [J.] Johnston and J. W. Wallace, leaders).

Aug. 20, '91. *Early p.m.*

Fierce sun pouring down as I write. The severe continued heat nearly all this month has left me down, and here as I write another hot wave commences. Dr. Bucke is still in Eng: starts back on the 26th in the Majestic—is well—has seen Tennyson, [he went with letter of introduction from Walt], rec'd with mark'd and unusual empressment, was there an hour and half. T. must be quite "himself alone" in manners, spontaneity, genuine manliness, etc: B. saw the whole family and describes it in a good off-hand letter which I will lend you to be return'd to me.

Sept. 22, '91.

Love to all inquiring Boston friends.

Among the many caricatures, parodies, and misrepresentations of Whitman, two sketches are perhaps most likely to mislead. They are Moncure D. Conway's article in the *Fortnightly*, 1866, and a piece by Jay C. Goldsmith, written over the pen-name of "Jay Charlton." Both were reprinted in "Pen Pictures of Modern Authors" (New York, 1882). Of "Jay Charlton's" flashy Bohemian stuff Whitman wrote me (as elsewhere stated) that it is the "silliest compound of nonsense, lies, and rot" he had ever seen, a continuous tissue of the most absurd mistatements; "and Conway's article," said he, "is not much better."

Goldsmith gives an account of an unpleasantness which occurred at Pfaff's between Walt Whitman and George Arnold at the time of the breaking out of the Rebellion. The anecdote is (as I learn by comparing authentic contemporary witness) so journalistically exaggerated and distorted by time and the imagination that it would be an injustice to Whitman to insert it. Mr. Charles E. Hurd, assistant editor of the Boston *Transcript*, who was himself acquainted with the members of the Pfaffian clique, was, at the time it flourished, residing in New York City, and has published in the *Commercial Bulletin* an elaborate narrative account of the literary Bohemia of Manahatta in 1850–60. He tells me that he heard of no such set-to as Goldsmith narrates, but that the only violent conduct on the occasion was that showed by George Arnold, who reached across the table, in the heat of a discussion on rebellion (in which he favoured secession), and seized Walt Whitman by the hair. It happens, also, that Mr. Whitman himself told this very anecdote one day in 1881 to Mr. Geo. P. Lathrop and myself as we sat together in the little parlour in Stevens Street in Camden. I quote what he said from my memorandum written down at the time. He remarked that George Arnold rose, and, holding up a glass of wine, proposed the toast "Success to the Southern Arms!" Walt Whitman said he [Whitman] thereupon broke out into a fierce and indignant speech, and left the place never

to return, going on shortly afterwards to the seat of war. I remember his dwelling fondly on the name and memory of Ada Clare—"Queen of Bohemia," as she was called at that time. Her writings in the *Saturday Press* show a cultivated mind. A novel by her was accepted for publication by Thayer and Eldridge of Boston. Whitman also recalled to memory the other Pfaffians, most of whom are now dead. "And there was Willy Winter," said he, "he did not die of hard drinking or get shot in the war; but then—he became respectable."

Mr. Conway's *Fortnightly* article treats Whitman much as some literary Buffalo Bill. He serves him up as a raree show to the British public. Conway lived to regret this and to become one of Walt Whitman's most reverent disciples. Out of pure affection for the master he struck work and came to Walt Whitman's funeral. He and I had a long talk in the little hall together; he urged very strenuously that it was absolutely necessary for him to make Whitman picturesque to the English public. If he had praised him to the skies, they would have cried out, "American brag!" and refused to print anything about him, for he was scarcely known then abroad. By the way, Dr. Bucke tells me that many of the facts for his article Conway got from Wm. D. O'Connor. Parts of it preserve a glimpse of Whitman when thirty-seven which is quite valuable, and I make no excuse for transcribing liberally from it:

"Having had occasion to visit New York soon after* the appearance of Walt Whitman's book [1855], I was urged by some friends to search him out, and make some report to them concerning him. It was on a Sunday in midsummer that I journeyed through the almost interminable and monotonous streets which stretch out upon 'fish-shaped Paumanok,' and

* A month or so after: see Mr. Conway's "Emerson at Home and Abroad," Trübner & Co., 1883, p. 292.

the direction led me to the very last house outward from the great city,—a small wooden house of two stories. At my third knock a fine-looking old lady opened the door just enough to eye me carefully, and ask what I wanted. It struck me after a little that his mother—for so she declared herself—was apprehensive that an agent of the police might be after her son on account of his audacious book. At last, however, she pointed to an open common with a central hill, and told me I should find her son there. The day was excessively hot, the thermometer at nearly 100°, the sun blazed down as only on sandy Long Island can the sun blaze. The common had not a single tree or shelter, and it seemed to me that only a very devout fire-worshipper indeed could be found there on such a day. No human being could I see at first in any direction; but just as I was about to return I saw, stretched upon his back, and gazing up straight at the terrible sun, the man I was seeking. With his gray clothing, his blue-gray shirt, his iron-gray hair, his swart, sun-burnt face and bare neck, he lay upon the brown-and-white grass—for the sun had burnt away its greenness—and was so like the earth upon which he rested that he seemed almost enough a part of it for one to pass by without recognition. I approached him, gave my name and reason for searching him out, and asked him if he did not find the sun rather hot. 'Not at all too hot,' was his reply; and he confided to me that this was one of his favourite places and attitudes for composing 'poems.' He then walked with me to his home, and took me along its narrow ways to his room. A small room of about fifteen square feet, with a single window looking out on the barren solitudes of the island; a small cot, a wash-stand with a little looking-glass hung over it from a tack in the wall, a pine table with pen, ink, and paper on it; an old line-engraving, representing Bacchus, hung on the wall, and opposite a similar one of Silenus; these constituted the visible environment of Walt Whitman; there was not, apparently, a single book in the room. . . .

"We passed the remainder of the day roaming or 'loafing' on Staten Island, where we had shade, and many miles of a beautiful beach. Whilst we bathed I was impressed by a certain grandeur about the man, and remembered the picture of Bacchus on the wall of his room. I then perceived that the sun had put a red mask on his face and neck, and that his body was a ruddy blond, pure and noble, his form being at the same time remarkable for fine curves and for that grace of movement which is the flower of shapely and well-knit bones. His head was oviform in every way; his [brown] hair, which was strongly mixed with gray, was cut close to his head, and, with his beard, was in strange contrast to the almost infantine fulness and serenity of his face. This serenity, however, came from the quiet light-blue eyes, and above these there were three or four deep horizontal furrows, which life had ploughed. The first glow of any kind that I saw about him was when he entered the water, which he fairly hugged with a lover's enthusiasm. But, when he was talking about that which deeply interested him, his voice, always gentle and clear, became slow, and his eyelids had a tendency to decline over his eyes. It was impossible not to feel at every moment the *reality* of every word and movement of the man, and also the surprising delicacy of one who was even freer with his pen than modest Montaigne.

"After making an appointment to meet Walt again during the week, when we would saunter through the streets of New York, I went off to find myself almost sleepless with thinking of this new acquaintance. He had so magnetised me, so charged me, as it were, with somewhat indefinable, that for the time the only wise course of life seemed to be to put on a blue shirt and a blouse, and loaf about Manahatta and Paumanok,—'loaf and invite my soul,' to use my new friend's phrase. I found time hanging heavily on my hands and the sights of the brilliant city tame, whilst waiting for the next meeting, and wondered if he would seem such a grand fellow when I saw him again. I found

him on the appointed morning setting in type, in a Brooklyn printing-office, a paper from the *Democratic Review*, urging the superiority of Walt Whitman's poetry over that of Tennyson, which he meant to print (as he did everything *pro* and *con*, in full) in the appendix of his next edition. He still had on the working man's garb, which (he said) he had been brought up to wear, and now found it an advantage to continue. It became plain to me, as I passed along the streets and on the ferry with him, that he was a prince incognito among his lower class acquaintances. They met him continually, grasped his hand with enthusiasm, and laughed and chatted (but on no occasion did he laugh, nor, indeed, did I ever see him smile). Having some curiosity to know whether this class of persons appreciated him at all, I privately said to a workman in corduroys, with whom I had seen him conversing, and whom he had just left, 'Do you know who that man there is?' 'That be Walt Whitman.' 'Have you known him long?' 'Many a year.' 'What sort of a man is he?' 'A fust-rate man is Walt. Nobody knows Walt but likes him; nearly everybody knows him, and—and *loves* him.' There was a curious look about the fellow as he emphasized the word *loves*, as if he were astonished at the success with which he had expressed himself. 'He has written a book, hasn't he?' 'Not as ever I hearn on.' Several times as we were crossing the waters about New York, I was able to separate from him, and put similar questions to artisans and others with whom I had seen him interchange greetings or words; but I found none of them knew anything about his writings, though all felt a pride in being acquainted with him. Nothing could surpass the blending of *insouciance* with active observation in his manner as we strolled along the streets. 'Look at that face!' he exclaimed once as we paused near the office of the *Herald*. I looked and beheld a boy of perhaps fifteen years, with certainly a hideous countenance, the face one-sided, and one eye almost

hanging out of a villainous low forehead. He had a bundle under his arm. 'There,' said Walt, 'is a New York reptile. There's poison about his fangs I think.' We watched him as he looked furtively about, and presently he seemed to see that we had our eyes on him, and was skulking off. At that my companion beckoned him, and after a little succeeded in bringing him to us, when we found he was selling obscene books. At the Tombs prison we went among the prisoners, and the confidence and volubility with which they ran to him to pour out their grievances, as if he were one in authority, was singular. In one man's case he took a special interest. The man, pending trial for a slight offence, had been put into a very disagreeable and unhealthy place. Hearing his account, Walt turned about, went straight to the governor of the prison and related the matter—ending thus: 'In my opinion it is a damned shame.' The governor was at first stunned by this from an outsider, and one in the dress of a labourer; then he eyed him from head to foot as if questioning whether to commit him, during which the offender stood eyeing the governor in turn with a severe serenity. Walt triumphed in this duel of eyeshots, and, without another word, the governor called an officer to go and transfer the prisoner to a better room. I have often remembered the oath of Walt Whitman on this occasion, as being one of the most religious utterances I have ever heard."

The relations between Walt Whitman and Ralph Waldo Emerson have excited a good deal of interest, and a great many mistaken ideas concerning said relations are afloat. Whitman sent Emerson a copy of his first little volume. Emerson replied in the famous letter, a copy of which, transcribed in 1891, directly from the original, is given here in the footnote.* It is

*Concord, Mass'tts, 21 July, 1855.

Walt Whitman—Dear Sir, I am not blind to the worth of the wonderful gift of "Leaves of Grass." I find it the most extraordinary

asserted that Emerson later receded from his first brave position. He did not. What he said he stuck to. But by the later published "Children of Adam" poems he was offended. The numerous records of bits of talk on Whitman uttered by him show that he could not go as far as his friend, could not see that his therapeutic aims in those productions justified their physiological plainness. The truth is that he cooled somewhat on the appearance of these poems; he was also somewhat offended at the publication of his private letter. He exhibited great weakness in not including in his "Parnassus" any poem by America's greatest poet! (Whitman himself told me that Emerson did not ask permission to do so). All these things were probably in Whitman's mind when he wrote his searching *Literary World* critique on Emerson (now included in "Specimen Days and Collect"). But running beneath all this weakness or misunderstanding on Emerson's part was a never-broken thread of friendship and admiration, as is strikingly set forth in the following letter to me by Whitman:

---

piece of wit and wisdom that America has yet contributed. I am very happy in reading it, as great power makes us happy. It meets the demand I am always making of what seemed the sterile and stingy nature, as if too much handiwork, or too much lymph in the temperament, were making our Western wits fat and mean.

I give you joy of your free and brave thought. I have great joy in it. I find incomparable things said incomparably well, as they must be. I find the courage of treatment that so delights us, and which large perception only can inspire.

I greet you at the beginning of a great career, which yet must have had a long foreground somewhere, for such a start. I rubbed my eyes a little, to see if this sunbeam were no illusion; but the solid sense of the book is a sober certainty. It has the best merits, namely, of fortifying and encouraging.

I did not know until I last night saw the book advertised in a newspaper that I could trust the name as real and available for a post-office. I wish to see my benefactor, and have felt much like striking my tasks and visiting New York to pay you my respects.

R. W. Emerson.

Camden, Feb. 25, '87—*Noon.*

Dear W. S. K.—It is of no importance whether I had read Emerson before starting L. of G. or not. The fact happens to be positively that I had *not.* The basis and body and genesis of the L[eaves] differing I suppose from Em[erson] and many grandest poets and artists [—] was and is that I found and find everything in the *common concrete,* the broadcast materials, the flesh, the common passions, the tangible and visible, etc., and in *the average,* and that I radiate, work from, these outward—or rather hardly wish to leave here but to remain and celebrate it all. Whatever the amount of this may be or not be, it is certainly *not Emersonian,* not Shakspere, not Tennyson—indeed, the antipodes of E. and the others in essential respects. But I have not suggested or exprest myself well in my book unless I have in a sort included them and their sides and expressions too—as this orb the world means and includes all climes, all sorts, L. of G.'s word is *the body, including all,* including the intellect and soul; E.'s word is mind (or intellect or soul).

If I were to unbosom to you in the matter I should say that I never cared so very much for E.'s writings, prose or poems, but from his first personal visit and two hours with me (in Brooklyn in 1866 or '65 ?) [the query mark his; he means '55 or '56] I had a strange attachment and love for *him* and his contact, talk, company, magnetism. I welcomed *him* deepest and always—yet it began and continued *on his part,* quite entirely; HE always sought ME. We probably had a dozen (possibly twenty) of these meetings, talks, walks, etc.—some five or six times (sometimes New York, sometimes Boston) had good long dinners together. I was very happy—I don't think I was at my best with him—he always did most of the talking —I am sure he was happy too. That visit to me at Sanborn's, by E. and family (see pp. 189-'90 *Specimen Days*), and the splendid formal-informal family dinner *to me,* next day, Sunday, Sept. 18, '81, by E., Mrs. E. and all, I consider not only a

victor-event in my life, but it is an after-explanation of so much and offered as an apology, peace-offering, justification, of much that the world knows not of. My dear friend, I think I know R.W.E. better than anybody else knows him—and loved him in proportion, but quietly. Much was revealed to me.

WALT WHITMAN.

Add to the above the following off-hand remarks (by Whitman himself, or one he endorses) :

"A person named Woodbury says in a just published book that R. W. Emerson told him how Walt Whitman appeared at a dinner party, in New York, coatless, in his shirt sleeves. Of course and certainly Walt Whitman did *not* so appear, and quite as certainly, of course, Emerson never said anything of the sort. The extreme friendliness of a few critics toward Walt Whitman is met by the *extremer* malignance and made-up falsehoods of other critics. One of the latter printed in a New York weekly that Whitman always wore an open red flannel shirt. In a book of Edward Emerson's, a foul account of his father's opinion of Walt Whitman is sneaked in by a foot-note. The true fact is, R. W. Emerson had a firm and deep attachment to Whitman from first to last, as person and poet, which Emerson's family and several of his conventional literary friends tried their best in vain to dislodge."*

And in a letter to Wm. D. O'Connor Whitman wrote, "What made and ever makes, the argument of Emerson in that walk on the [Boston] Common dear and holy to me was its personal affectionateness, as of an elder brother to a younger. It was a vehement and even passionate well-wishing, which I felt then, and feel to this hour, the gratitude and reverence of my life could never repay." †

**Lippincott's*, March, 1891. †New York *Tribune*, June 18, 1882.

The walk on the Common alluded to was the one in which Emerson endeavoured to persuade Whitman to remove from his book the poems on the passion of love or procreation. "Heroism" Emerson has said, "feels and never reasons, and therefore is always right. . . . Heroism works in contradiction to the voice of mankind, and in contradiction, for a time, to the voice of the great and good. Heroism is an obedience to a secret impulse of an individual character." Strange that he did not remember this dictum when he toiled so strenuously with his friend to induce him to be *dis*obedient to the secret impulse of his better nature!

It, after all, makes very little difference what Emerson thought of Whitman, since the latter clearly sweeps an orbit vaster than his own, and has in every respect a broader and more massive nature. Mr. F. B. Sanborn, Emerson's friend and neighbour, told me that Mr. Emerson remarked to him once that *Leaves of Grass* were a mixture of the Bagvat-gita and the New York *Herald* Mr. Sanborn tells me that Emerson valued W. W. for his freshness and his original relation to nature and his exaltation of the present, but that probably the reason he did not include specimens of Whitman in his "Parnassus" (1874) was that he did not regard *Leaves of Grass* as poetry at all! By his own confession Emerson had no ear for music whatever. This may account for his failure to note the symphonic music of the chants of his brother-poet. Emerson was narrow, it is undeniable. As Dr. Bartol says of him, "he was a soloist at the concert, his performance slenderly related to the choir." Dear, revered Emerson! But, alas! that clerical ancestry (eight generations of it), that Boston respectability! How true it is, as Taine says, that "the Puritan destroys the artist, stiffens the man, fetters the writer, and leaves of artist, man, writer, only a sort of abstract being, the slave of a watchword!" It is with mortification that one remembers that during all the years of Emerson's life he never printed one word of allusion to—let

alone admiration of—Whitman. In one of his posthumously published letters to Carlyle he alludes apologetically to the poems of "one, Walt Whitman, a printer," which he sends him telling him he can light his pipe with the volume if he does not like it. This is all very pitiful.

Mr. J. T. Trowbridge and I have had some talk on Whitman. He is at heart a great admirer of Walt Whitman, and told me that since "Lear" and "Othello" nothing equal to the "Song of Myself" has appeared in our literature. But he thinks that Emerson inspired the first poems of Whitman. Now, considering the latter's undeniable and overwhelming originality it becomes of very little importance, really, who supplied inspiration. The "Song of Myself" is a poem that juts up sheer out of literature, as unique in character as the Flora and Fauna of a Galapagos island emergent from the blue floor of the Pacific.

However, it is just as well to show that Whitman's statement that he had not read Emerson's books at all prior to writing his first volume is not a mistaken one. John Burroughs, in his "Notes on Walt Whitman," p. 16, says, "Whitman, up to the time he published the quarto edition, had never read the Essays or Poems of Mr. Emerson at all. This is positively true. In the summer following that publication [the book appeared early in July 1855, hence the summer of '55 is of course meant] he first became acquainted with the essays in this wise: he was frequently in the habit of going down to the sea-shore at Coney Island and spending the day bathing in the surf, and rambling along the shore, or lounging on the sand; and on one of these excursions he put a volume of Emerson into the little basket containing his dinner and his towel. There for the first time he read 'Nature,' etc. ['Nature' and the Miscellaneous Addresses of Emerson were published in 1849 in one volume]. Soon, on similar excursions, the two other volumes [the Essays proper] followed. Two years still elapsed, however, and after second edition was issued, before he read Emerson's poems."

Pretty explicit statement this! and confirmed in every particular by Whitman.

"But," says Mr. Trowbridge, "Why should Whitman have sent one of the first copies of the quarto to Emerson if he had not felt that he was *rapport* with his own ideas, if, in short, he had not read his books?" I reply that no one has denied that Whitman was not aware of the slowly rising fame of Emerson, and that he had not read notices and reviews of his books in the journals. In fact, he knew just enough about him to think it worth while to send him a cheap paper-covered copy of his book.

The *Democratic Review* of New York was the heavy-gunned literary magazine of America in Whitman's early days. It was very much what the *Nineteenth Century* is now, and was contributed to pretty regularly by the principal American literati,—such as Poe, Hawthorne, Whittier, Lowell, and Alexander Everett. Walt Whitman himself published many articles in it between 1841 and 1847. It is to be supposed, therefore, that he was in the habit of occasionally reading this magazine, at least during the time in which he was himself a contributor. Now mark the reviews of Emerson which appeared in it:—

February, 1838—an analytical review (ten pages, with copious citations) of Emerson's "Nature."

May, 1847—a keen and sympathetic eight-page review of Emerson's poetry.

June, 1845—a fourteen-page paper entitled "Emerson's Essays. By a Disciple." A scholarly, philosophical piece of work, forming a complete description and study of the wondrous New England orator whose lectures were exciting so much interest and eliciting so many contradictory opinions.

1844, pp. 391–394.—"Unitarian Portraits." By W. A. Jones. Long quotations from "Nature," and a reference to the just issued Vol. I. of Emerson's "Essays" as a "book placing him in the first rank of the thinkers of this country."

July, 1844.—"Spirit and Tendencies of the New School of Philosophy." A long, heavy paper which quotes Emerson freely and admiringly; for instance, such stirring sentences as the following:—

"It is only as a man puts off from himself all external support and stands alone that I see him to be strong and to prevail. He is weaker by every recruit to his banner. Is not a man better than a town? Ask nothing of men, and, in the endless mutation, thou only, firm column, must presently appear the upholder of all that surrounds thee."—"A man should see that he can live all history in his own person. He must sit solidly at home with might and main, and not suffer himself to be bullied by kings or empires, but know that he is greater than all the geography and all the government of the world."—"All things are known to the soul, it is not to be surprised by any communication. Nothing can be greater than it."—"God enters by a private door into every individual."

Now, if any one out of the five foregoing articles had engaged the attention of Whitman, it would have furnished ground enough for the sending of a presentation copy of *Leaves of Grass.* Indeed, Emerson was pretty well known and talked about, not merely by the *Democratic Review*, but by all the principal home and foreign journals, in the decade between 1845 and 1855.

Again, Mr. Trowbridge refers to a passage in the breezy and generous-hearted, but rather ill-advised, open letter addressed to Emerson by Whitman in the epilogue of his second edition of *Leaves of Grass.* The passage is as follows: Speaking of the supremacy of Individuality,—"that new moral American continent . . . the ever-satisfying and ever unsurveyable shores,"—he adds (p. 357): "These shores you found. I say

you have led The States there—*have led me there* [italics mine]. . . . It is yours to have been the original true captain who put to sea, intuitive, positive, rendering the first report."

These words were written some time between the summers of 1855 and '56, when Whitman, according to his own explicit statement, read Emerson for the first time. That the whole letter in which they occur was thrown off in the first flush of that enthusiastic gratitude which all young men of noble natures feel on making acquaintance at first hand with Emerson's clarion thought is clear, not only from internal evidence (the use of the words "*have* led," for example), but from the following passage written by Whitman in 1880 :—

"The reminiscence that years ago I began, like most youngsters, to have a touch (though it came late, and was only on the surface) of Emerson-on-the-brain—that I read his writings reverently, and address'd him in print as 'Master,'* and for a month or so thought of him as such—I retain not only with composure, but positive satisfaction. I have noticed that most young people of eager minds pass through this stage of exercise." Now, Whitman never addressed Emerson as "Master" anywhere but in the open letter before referred to, which was written after the time, or during the time (1856), when he was composing for his second edition some of his longest and finest ethical pieces. In these productions I am willing to admit that one may by close scrutiny discover the influence of Emerson, though it would hardly be suspected unless one's mind were directed to the subject. About the only similarity between these poems—"Salut au Monde," "Song of the Broadaxe," "By Blue Ontario's Shore," "To You," "Song of Prudence," "Song

* ["Receive, dear Master, these statements and assurances, through me, for all the young men, and for an earnest that we know none before you, but the best following you ; and that we demand to take your name into our keeping, and that we will stick to it and enlarge upon it through These States."]

of the Rolling Earth," "Song of the Answerer," and "Song of the Open Road"—and the early addresses and essays of Emerson is that in them, as in Emerson's writings, the key-note is, "Let us have great and heroic individuals." Add to this a few points of ethical agreement between Emerson and Whitman,—to live in the present, to enjoy an original relation to the universe, to fall back upon the intuitions for final justification and see in the instincts something beyond logic, the identity of the spiritual and the material, speaking the truth whatever befalls, self-reliance, sitting solidly at home, scorning conformity, conventions, apologies,—and you have exhausted all there is in common between them.

Finally, Mr. Trowbridge states that in 1860, when Walt Whitman was in Boston, he (W. W.) told him that in his early authorial days he wrote and destroyed and rewrote much: "My ideas," he said (according to Mr. Trowbridge's recollection), "were simmering and simmering, and Emerson brought them to a boil." I will only say of this that, if correct, it must either refer to chance reviews and quotations from Emerson which Walt had seen previous to the issue of his first edition or more probably to the influence of E. upon him in the year 1855–56, after the publication of that edition.

The truth is Walt Whitman was no more indebted to Emerson than is every thinking American or Englishman. There is not a writer in Great Britain or America whose thought has not been tinged in some degree by that of Carlyle and Emerson. They have been built into our brains as Kant and Goethe into the brain of Germany: we have absorbed them as we absorb air, water, meat.

The regard in which Walt Whitman is held by other of his eminent contemporaries is so well known that I shall not do more than set down here a few of the more remarkable utterances concerning him. Carlyle, although not a personal admirer, considered Whitman to be "a man furnished for the

highest of all enterprises,—that of being the poet of his age."* Tennyson, as is known, was his cordial admirer and correspondent, and has been known to delight a social circle by long recitations from *Leaves of Grass*. In 1890 he stated to a friend that in his opinion Whitman was probably "the greatest of living poets."† Ruskin's opinion of W. W. is stated in the following extract from a private letter, kindly loaned me by Mr. Herbert J. Bathgate of Chester, England, to whom it was addressed :—

"Brantwood, Coniston,
Lancashire,
29 Jan. '80.

"I have not time to write such a letter as I should like to Mr. Whitman. Will you kindly transmit the value of enclosed cheque to him—with request for five copies? The reason neither he nor Emerson is read in England is, first, that they are deadly true—in the sense of rifles—against all our deadliest sins, and, second, that their truth is asserted with an especial colour of American egotism, which good English scholars cannot—and bad ones will not—endure."

The above was written a dozen years ago, since which time Whitman's works have been sold by the ten thousand all through England, Ireland, and Scotland, making him one of the most popular of poets in those countries. Mr. Ruskin's reference to "American egotism" is rather diverting, in view of his own well-known egotism. It is the pot calling the kettle black.

Presidents Lincoln and Garfield often saluted Whitman with respect on the streets of Washington, the latter being an intimate friend. Says Robert Louis Stevenson: "*Leaves of Grass* tumbled the world upside down for me, blew into space a thousand cobwebs of genteel and ethical illusion, and, having

* *Appleton's Journal*, 1876, p. 531.

† *The American* (Philad.), April, 1890.

thus shaken my tabernacle of lies, set me back again upon a strong foundation of all the original and manly virtues." Thoreau thought that all the sermons of the land put together were not equal to *Leaves of Grass* for preaching (Letters). Edward Everett Hale said of the first quarto: "It is well worth going twice to the bookstore to buy. . . There is not a word in it meant to attract readers by its grossness" (*North American Review*, January, 1856). Mr. Hale told me in '88 that he should stand by every word of that early indorsement of his. Charles Sumner used to say of "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" that it alone entitled its author to the reputation of a great poet.

Not least in importance in the study of this curious and phenomenal writer, and as a partial accounting for his personal qualities, is a study of his ancestry and surroundings. To what Dr. R. M. Bucke has given in his valuable "Walt Whitman" let me add a few thoughts on Whitman's maternal ancestry,—the Quaker and Dutch elements in his make-up.

Ancestrally, Walt Whitman, who makes so much of motherhood and fatherhood, came himself meandering from a blended tri-heredity stream of Dutch ("Hollandisk") and the original Friends (Quakers) and Puritans of Cromwell's time. His mother, a woman of rare force and sweetness of character, was on one side of Netherland descent, and his maternal grandmother was a Quaker in religion; and from his mother, he himself admitted, came his best traits. It is a curious fact that the three chief democrats of the New World should be immediately or remotely of Quaker ancestry,—Whitman, Whittier, and Abraham Lincoln. Yet this need not surprise us; for from what does Quakerism historically spring if not from a deep-seated, quenchless passion for freedom? How strongly marked the Quaker traits are in Walt Whitman no one hitherto has noticed or at least set forth in print.

Walt Whitman always falls back upon the *Inner Light*, the intuitions of the soul (a Quaker doctrine), as, *e.g.*, in his famous conversation with Emerson on Boston Common. It is, perhaps, the Quaker blood in him that made him satisfied with the placid life of Philadelphia. Other Quaker elements in him are :—

Self-respect.

Respect for every other human being. Quakerism is extremely democratic; any man or woman may be in direct communication with God; hence Whitman's basilar doctrine of comradeship, equality, love of the average man, and his exalting of woman to perfect equality with man.

His sincerity and plainness.

His placidity. Freedom from all passionate grief (though this comes partly from his paternal Dutch or Hollandesque ancestry).

His silence. If he couldn't do what you wanted him to do, he didn't say he was sorry: he was simply silent.

Unconventionalism. No bowing to audience; wore his hat in the house if he wanted to (as do Quakers); neither took nor gave titles of honour or respect.

Belief in the right of free speech.

Benevolence and friendliness.

Deep religiousness. The soul is his constant theme.

One cannot say that Quakerism has done more than to somewhat perceptibly *tinge* Whitman's writings. The dithyrambic fire and superhuman strength of them are drawn from a deeper fount than that which welled forth from the soul of leather-coated cobbler Fox. And so is the passion-flower bloom of Whittier's soul,—the fiery attar of his rustic verse. In Whitman's case the Quaker survivals are chiefly visible in his personal habits and social temperament. But they are none the less interesting.

I think the Quaker traits in him grew stronger every year.

The volcanic strength of mature manhood being passed, he reverts tenderly to the maternal teachings: they well up spontaneously then (a tenderer feeling, more Christ-like spirit of benevolence, if possible). The sun's glare had left the landscape, and the myriad quiet lights of heaven came out one by one.

Yet I believe the Dutch element dominated the Quaker in him. He "favoured" his mother, *née* Louisa Van Velsor,—inherited her to the life, emotionally and in physique. She was a person of medium size (a little *plus*), of splendid physique and health, a hard worker, bore eight children, was beloved by all who met her; good-looking to the last; lived to be nearly eighty. Dr. Bucke's book about Walt Whitman has quite a good portrait of his mother at seventy. No tenderer or more invariable tie was ever between mother and son than the love between her and Walt Whitman. No one could have seen her and her father, Major Kale (Cornelius) Van Velsor, of Cold Spring, Queens County, N.Y., either in their prime or in their older age, without instantly perceiving their plainly-marked Hollandesque physiognomy, colour and body build. Walt Whitman had all of it. He showed it in his old features, especially in his full face and red colour. The rubicund face in the oil portrait of him by Hine, the New Yorker, or Eakins, the Philadelphia artist, looks amazingly like one of Rubens's or Teniers's Dutch burgomasters; as also does one of Cox's photographs (the one with hat on, head thrown back. W. called it "the laughing philosopher"). Tacitus, Taine, Motley, all speak of the rose-coloured skins, blue eyes, and flaxen (almost white) hair of the Hollanders. The Romans related that the children of the Netherlands had the hair of old men. Perhaps the turning of Walt's hair almost white before he was forty may have to be ascribed to this Dutch peculiarity.

For some reason, there is no fitting record, either in portraiture or literary text, of the grand women of Holland,

although that country produced the choicest specimens of the earth. It was a type and growth of its own: a noble and perfect maternity was its result.

Whitman, as his friends know, was fond of resuming in conversation the history and development of the Low Dutch, their concrete physiology, their fierce war against Philip and Alva, the building of the great dykes, the shipping and trade and colonization,—from 1600 to the present,—and their old cities and towers, and soldiery, and markets, and salt air, and flat topography, and human physiognomy, and bodily form, and their coming and planting here in America, and investing themselves not so much in outward manifestations as in the blood and breed of the American race; and he considered his *Leaves of Grass* to be in some respects understood only by reference to that Hollandesque interior of history and personality. To his latest hour he never forgave Washington Irving for making the foundation-settlers of New Amsterdam (New York City) so ridiculous and stupid.

One likes to think of Whitman, the first democrat of the New World, as sprung from far-off Holland, the cradle of liberty in the Old World. It must be plainly said, however, that Walt Whitman was monumentally neither an Englishman nor a Dutchman nor a Quaker: he was an American pagan, *sui generis*. Nevertheless, the Hollander and the Quaker were plainly discernible in the background of his being—like the Puncheon ghost in Alice's necromantic vision. Every man is really a sort of palimpsest, and his mind and body are superimposed upon a series of some hundred million erasures by the hand of Nature. Your ancestors or mine, footing it back only to the time of William the Conqueror, actually number three or four millions. A typical poet is the summing up of a race, its perfect flower, containing not only its richest perfume, but the germs of its coming vital thought. To Walt Whitman, as,

in many respects, the voice and type of the American-born Dutch race, may be applied the old Hollandesque couplet:

> "De waarheid die in duister lag,
> Die komt met klaarheid aan den dag."
>
> ("The truth that lay darkling now leaps to the light.")

Leaves of Grass, and their author, too, are much like a great mass of dark-rolling gray clouds, looking at first impassive enough, but surcharged with chain lightning.

Not the Scotch-Irish stock itself, or the Jewish, is more dourly and stubbornly prepotent in the ocean of human society than is this Dutch strain in America. These original stocks tinge and saturate the billows of humanity through generations, as great rivers debouching into the deep carry their own colour in haughty flow far out on the high seas. Few realize how the Dutch element has percolated through the population in New York and Pennsylvania. As late as 1750 more than one half of the inhabitants of New York State were Dutch.* The rural Dutch to-day almost always have large families of children, and form in every respect the solidest element in their community. In New York City and in Brooklyn and Albany, it is superfluous to say that to belong to a Dutch family is to belong to blue blood, the aristocracy. Besides Whitman, the American Dutch have produced such intellectualities as Wendell Phillips, the orator, and the scientist and wit Oliver Wendell Holmes,—descended from the Wendells of Albany on his mother's side. It is stated by recent savans that there are cogent reasons for believing that the origin of our public-school system is traceable to the wisdom of the citizens of New Amsterdam. (See Mr. Elting's paper, just mentioned.) "The first universities," says Max Müller, "which provided chairs for the comparative

* Irving Elting, "Dutch Village Communities on the Hudson River," in Johns Hopkins University "Studies," etc., Series 4, Vol. I., p. 65.

study of the religions of the world, were those of little, plucky Holland."

The Dutch are very practical and materialistic, and are great money-makers, but are yet "terribly transcendental and cloudy, too," wrote Walt Whitman to me. "More than half the Hollandisk* immigrants to New York Bay," he wrote, "became farmers, and a goodly portion of the rest became engineers or sailors."

The English and their cousins the Low Dutch are so much alike in basic traits that it is difficult to unthread these in Whitman's make-up, and say, "So much is English, and so much Dutch." But I think his tremendous stubbornness, the inexorable firmness of his phlegmatic nature, are inherited from the heroic defenders of Haarlem, Leyden, and Alkmaar. His endurance, practicality, sanity, thrift, excessive neatness and purity of person, and the preponderance of the simple and serious over the humorous and refined in his phrenology, are clearly of Dutch origin. Taine, in his rare little study, "The Philosophy of Art in the Netherlands," speaks of the phlegm of the Dutch and the passivity of their features. They love silence and absorption of mind; are collected, calm, patient, long-planning, and prefer depth to shining surfaces. Their soft and sluggish atmosphere produces in them a measureless content and a great disposition to sensuousness. All this applies remarkably to the Hollandesque-American poet. Remember, too, the prosaic realism of Whitman—his deep-rooted hankering after details, enumerations—and tally it with the minute finish of the pictures of Van Eyck, Teniers, Rubens.

* A word of his own coining. "About the best word to nip and print and stick to," he states. His word suggests to me "Hollandesque" (after the analogy of Moresque), which I prefer, I believe, though "Hollandisk" is more vigorous. *Isk* is the old Scandinavian form, older than *ish*, which has acquired a depreciative and slightly contemptuous meaning.

In love of power and glowing-exuberant life Whitman seems to me strongly to resemble Rubens. Like him, too, in his deep affection for his mother and in his generous treatment of his contemporaries. Though the topping fact forever separating Walt from all those Old-World Netherlanders is his profound spirituality, his soaring, never-absent mystical philosophy. The transcendentalism, or profound determination upon the religious, of the American-born Dutch (and it is undoubted) is not found among the Continental Hollanders,—at least in their art. Ruskin, speaking of the materialistic side of the Dutch character, caustically remarks that their only god is a pint pot, and all the incense offered thereto comes out of a small censer or bowl at the end of a pipe. But this is only a peevish artist's persiflage. It leaves wholly untouched the massive and splendid moral qualities of the Dutch. In America the Netherlanders have evidently not only blended with and coloured the English stock, but have themselves been perceptibly Americanized, have assimilated a measure of the Puritan qualities of spirituality, philosophy, and idealism, that seem to thrive in our intense, thought-sharpening climate, and among the New England people by whom the American Dutch have continually been surrounded, both on Long Island and in New York State.

As for Whitman's imaginative genius, I have sometimes wondered whether it did not come in, perchance, through a Welsh crevice? His maternal grandmother was a Williams, and almost all Williamses are Welsh.

PART II.

DRIFT AND CUMULUS.

I HAVE often thought, when pondering the story of such pioneer souls as Walt Whitman, that their life is only a longer Olympic contest. The finish at the goal is the test of the race. You shall receive no shouts of approbation, no olive wreath for the heated brow, no palm of victory, no public banquet with flowers and wine and Pindaric odes, until every contest of the pancratium has been won. This, however, was the good fortune of him whom we are considering, He was a good man, and received a good man's reward. He was great, and received the rewards of greatness. His life was passed in doing kind deeds. His nature was mingled of good and evil, but the good in him was uppermost.

Walt Whitman is the evangelist of the human heart, the poet of universal humanity. The office of such men in the world's economy is to break up stereotyped thought and institutions, and set free the creative force again ; and the hammer that smites and the arrow that flies and the hand that wields are not tools of the Deity, but Deity itself at work.

The moral principles running all through Whitman's writings are patriotism ; liberty ; personal freedom ; be yourself to yourself a law ; belief in your own soul's intuitions ; equal honour to the body and the mind ; reverence for self, to know that the sun and moon hang in the sky for you, whoever you are ; woman the equal of man and to be equally honoured ; moral heroism, to confront odds undaunted and abide one's time ; faith in nature, to be joyous as nature is joyous ; to exhibit and cultivate manly affections, the love of man (vir) for man ; sympathy for the ignorant and suffering, not excluding the lowest types.

All these may be summed up in the one word MANLINESS: "Produce great persons, the rest follows." It is this that commends Whitman's writings to the youth of Great Britain, whose ideal is, and always has been, manly endeavour, slaying of giants and dragons in far-off lands, and the confronting of great odds. A gentleman writing from Paris, some years ago, to Mr. E. P., thought it undoubted that to the influence of *Leaves of Grass* upon contemporary thought in Great Britain is due an increased respect for the natural and the true, the revelation written in the life around us. Walt Whitman was continually in receipt of letters from young men in all parts of the world, telling him of the good his writings had done in moulding their characters and strengthening their nobler impulses. The head of a boys' school in Worcester, Massachusetts, wrote to him in 1889: "For years you have been to me a living presence. I thank you for the strong helpful hand that I have many a time felt in mine. You have strengthened me in my work for the boys and girls who are soon to be the men and women of 'these States.'" A young man writes in 1889 to Whitman, from New Zealand, his thanks for the ray of hope he has received, entangled as he was in the meshes of materialism, and thinks that his writings are especially fitted for the young men of the Australian colonies and for those in America. As an indication of his popularity in Great Britain, read what Mr. Sheridan Ford of New York wrote him in April, 1888, asking him if he would entertain a proposition to cross the water to lecture in Great Britain: "From facts in my possession I am quite sure that you would be very successful, for the cultured class of Great Britain have an abiding interest in you and everything which concerns you. I should be willing to guarantee to you a stated sum, or, if you would prefer it, star you on a percentage. My friend and yours—R. Macaulay Stevenson of Glasgow, perhaps better known to you

as 'Calamus'—thinks that your reception throughout Scotland would partake of the character of an ovation."

Leaves of Grass was eight years in the crucible, and five times recast, before it took shape satisfactory to its author (*Spec. Days and Coll.*, p. 178). The first booklet was only the realisation of part of a plan for the production of what might serve as the handsel of a literature inspired wholly by native themes and native life. The outlines of this plan may be found in the preface to the first quarto.

The idea of a native literature was in the air; the idea of nationality was dawning. We wanted a national literature, and thought it must be aboriginal. Hence all those Indian epics mentioned by the historians of our literature. Whittier's "Bridal of Pennacook" was published in 1848, and "Hiawatha" appeared only a few months after *Leaves of Grass;* while Longfellow in his journals records the receipt of numerous letters by him from *literati* raging for aboriginality, one of them even proposing a "Poets' Convention" to help on the cause.* A new continent, a new literature, and a new universe; fresh lands, fresh thoughts, the horizon of time rolled back to infinite distances, man's origin discovered, the unity of the universe detected, the idea of world-democracy dawning, the attention of mankind withdrawn from the past to the marvellous present and the glories of the future; new forces (steam and electricity) beginning to play their stupendous *rôle* in social economy,—these were the inspiriting influences that helped to mould Walt Whitman's strong and haughty psalms of democracy in their inception back there in 1847–55. It was out of the midst, too, of literary flippancy and disgraceful political corruption that this new John Baptist rose in words of warn-

* *Longfellow's Journals and Letters*, edited by Samuel Longfellow, Vol. II., p. 20.

ing and rebuke, of joy and faith. The accent was too close to nature to be understood by cit-dom; there was push and arrogance and slang in the book; the portrait looked repulsive and defiant, the technique was unheard of. Naturally, then, the vast range of the author's mind was not at first divined by more than a half-dozen or so, including Emerson. The disgust of the drawing-room poetlings and witlings was unspeakable. This great, hairy Paumanok giant, his brow hard with the brine of the sea, his feet leaving trails of salt and sand on our floors,—'gad, it's too bad, bursting in on us in this fashion, with his cohorts of outlandish verses!

But it was the tsetze-flies of the press who made the most furious onslaught on the new-comer,—that swarm of hack journalists, soured authors, and dyspeptic pedants, of the New York *Nation* variety, that is always annoying the rear and flank of the pioneer corps of advancing humanity, the little flagellantic and antiseptic benefit they confer being vastly overbalanced by the cynical, pseudo-critical habits of mind they impart to young men. At a Cambridge, Massachusetts, dinner-party the entire company united with their host in imploring an English guest not to present to Whitman the letter of introduction he was bearing to him from an eminent English nobleman, representing to the guest that Whitman was nothing but a low New York rowdy and blackguard. No man has been more deeply lacessed by the briars of ridicule or more foully besmirched with the mud of Vanity Fair. I think the persecution by its unparalleled bitterness somewhat injured the buoyancy and fresh joyousness of his mind. It certainly struck a circle of isolation about him, which was not broken until about 1874, when English recognition and encouragement, as he himself thankfully admits, started him on a new career of success. But back there in '55 the scribblers of the day gave him swiftly to understand that he could not enter the society of which they were the guardians unless he appeared in the regulation claw-

tail, kids, and white tie. "You are going to court, Master Tressilian: you will please remember that your blazonry must be *argent* and *or:* no other tinctures will pass current."

These attacks of the press were probably regarded by Walt Whitman much as the sailors were by Voltaire's 120,000 feet high Micromegas, who makes a kind of *diminuendo* speaking-trumpet of his thumb-nail paring (so as not to kill the human animalcules with the noise of his voice), and through it thus addresses them:—

"Invisible insects, whom the hand of the Creator has been pleased to bring forth in the depths of the infinitely small, I thank him for what he has deigned to permit me to know of impenetrable secrets. Perhaps where I live you would be despised, but I despise no one. I offer you my protection."

Drawing the circle now a little closer, let it be premised that we shall discover in our analysis many things of which the poet himself was not the conscious producer. The Japanese and Chinese are the finest colourists in the world, just because they are ignorant of all rules of colour; and the poet builds up his lofty numbers as a bee constructs her cell, a diamond its octagons of flame, or a crystal its perfect six-sided tower. Nothing in Ruskin is so true as his insistence that deep scientific knowledge ruins the artist.

Looked at as a whole, *Leaves of Grass* is mystical, joyous, full of the power to impart courage and moral strength. It resembles the Iliad or the Nibelungen Lied in being a growth, not a make, a true epos, not an epopee. It is perhaps the only great epos in the world in which some individual woman is not the prime mover and the centre around which all revolves. Yet it honours woman more than all the others.

Walt Whitman writes the word "Suggestiveness" as the key-word of his poetical works. And, indeed, he does sow that mystic grain broadcast over many of his pages. Sometimes he is oracular, hard to understand (Suggestiveness we may call

the daughter of Latency and Adumbration, may we not?) He likes to wear his visor down, likes to construct crypts, oubliettes, and Cretan labyrinths in his work. He loves the plain beaten road, too, but only if he may deify it, pave heaven's parlours with its transmuted mud and tapestry their walls with its running blackberry vines. His sceptre is the wand of Prospero. The globe is his floating symbol, and time and space his clothing-weeds. He is by instinct and choice a pioneer; the untried, the problematical, attract him. His political gospel is but tentative, his treatment of the sex-passion defiant and full of suggestion, his sublime Hegelian philosophy of the universe unverified. As an illustration of this poet's power to call up by words the vaguest and subtlest emotions of the mind, I would cite § 50 of the "Song of Myself" (read it in close connection with § 49), wherein is hinted, as I think, that poignant-sweet thrill—born of joy, pride, sublimity, awe, and something far deeper and untellable—that we feel when dwelling on the mystery of death and the stars.

I sometimes think of *Leaves of Grass* as a musical symphony or Drama of Creation: the leader lifts his wand, and the orchestra sweep the strings in a grand preluding overture ("Inscriptions"), wherein all the motives of the succeeding parts are announced,—Life and Death, Love and Hatred, the Body and the Soul. The work is a Trilogy, celebrating the Body, Democracy, and Religion,—the mystery of the macrocosm and the nobility of the microcosm,—and the key-words to these three groups respectively are Joy, Love, and Faith (Saint Paul's faith, hope, and charity, curious to note).

This resolution of the work into a Trilogy is supported, I find, by the (unconscious) arrangement of the whole in the final editions, as well as by the poet's own attempts to give it logical and *raisonné* form. Although there are a good many separate poems which do not fall into this classification, yet, considered in broad masses, the work naturally crystallizes (just as it

stands, without interrupting the paging) into three consecutive groups, corresponding with the triple elements, the Body, Democracy, and Religion, as in the following plan :—

			Pages.
Poems of Life and the Body.	Song of Myself.	*The Physical.*	1–95
	Children of Adam.		
	Calamus.	*Comradeship* (based on the sympathetic rather than the cerebral system with Whitman).	95–120
	Salut au Monde.		
	Song of the Open Road.		120–196
	Crossing Brooklyn Ferry.		
	Our Old Feuillage.		
	Song of Joy.		
	Song of the Broadaxe.		
	Song of the Exposition.		
	Song of the Redwood Tree.		
	Song for Occupations, etc.		
	Sea Poems.	Outdoor Life tinged with the Pensive.	196–219
Poems of Democracy.	The War Poems (including the dirge for Lincoln).	- - -	219–315
	By Blue Ontario's Shore.		
	Return of the Heroes.		
	Old Ireland.		
	To a Foiled European Revolutionaire (sic).		
	To Him that was Crucified.		
	You Felons.		
	Laws for Creation.		
	To a Common Prostitute.		
	O Star of France, etc.		
Poems of Religion.	Passage to India.	Death and Immortality.	315-382
	Prayer of Columbus.		
	To think of Time.		
	Whispers of Heavenly Death.		
	Songs of Parting.		

Note how nicely the objects which Whitman has said (Preface to 1876 ed., and the *Critic*, Jan. 5, '84, and elsewhere) he had in view in writing his poems fit this classification. Here they are brought together from different parts of his writings:—

(1) To sing the songs of the body and existence [and make report of the beauties of nature]. *	Poems of the Body.
(2) To make a type-portrait of a healthy individual.	Poems of Democracy.
(3) To exalt the average personality, the "divine average."	
(4) To celebrate the need of comradeship.	
(5) To sing the present, his own land.	
(6) To chant songs of death and immortality.	Poems of Religion.

The same classification resolves the apparent chaos of the "Song of Myself," or "Walt Whitman," as it is called in early editions. Broadly speaking, the first part of this poem—§ 1 to that part of § 33 beginning, "I understand the large hearts of heroes"—celebrates nature and the body ("physiology"); the second portion—§ 33 to that portion of § 41 beginning, "Magnifying and applying come I"—sets forth the democratic principle (comradeship, compassion, etc.); the last portion—§ 41 to the end—deals chiefly with religion (death, the stars, and immortality).

In the utterances on Liberty in the first quarto there is as high and splendid a sentiment as was ever uttered by Thoreau

* The rough notes of what he elsewhere says he designed to be his chief nature poem stand now as "Specimen Days" in his prose writings (see p. 199 of that book).

or John Brown. "A Boston Ballad" is quaint and awkward only; was written apropos of the rendition of Anthony Burns into slavery in 1854. But the "Europe" strikes a glorious note. It was inspired by the Revolution of '48–'49. First came the abdication of Louis Philippe; Hungary was declared independent, with Kossuth dictator; a republic was declared at Rome, Garibaldi and Mazzini active; and constitutions were obtained by the people of Prussia and of Holland. But the tables are turned: the patriot leaders take to flight; France surrenders to Napoleon the Little, Italy to the Pope and Victor Emanuel, and Hungary to Francis Joseph of Austria. It is necessary to remember this outline of events to get full understanding of the poem.

The atmosphere of *Leaves of Grass* is in the strongest possible contrast to that of all other poetry. Turn suddenly from the sugared love-conceits of any anthology of Anglo-American poetry to the pages of Whitman: you are in Brobdignag at once, come thither by seven-league boot-strides out of Liliput; 'tis like turning from a nut-shell Iliad to an elephant folio in mammoth type: you have to hold the book from you at arm's length to get the sense. Or you feel as if you had all at once emerged from a magic-lantern show in a close room to the severe and simple reality of the earth and the sky. The chants of *Leaves of Grass* are not to be compared with the old models at all, since they are avowedly written on a different plan; namely, to give the hidden spirit of things, to suggest, to influence subtly your moral nature, but not primarily to make a rhymed jingle or describe events or characters, as in Homer and Shakspere. Shallow students of Whitman never get hold of this cardinal premise at all, but serenely criticise him for not attaining what he avowed at the start he did not intend to do. And this kind of twaddle is still called criticism.

The war, with its consequent suffering, wrought a great change in Whitman's style. It increased the melody of his

song, but gave it the pensive tinge of grief. In the poems of the first three editions, up to 1860, there is obtrusive democratic pride, a purposed roughness, the self-assertion of a workman shouldering his way through the crowd alone, amid the sneers of the dilettanti and aristocratic classes, to the position his soul's greatness entitles him to occupy. In the post-bellum productions, however,—the strong and tender war-chants, the exquisite sea-poems, "Eidolons," "The Ox-tamer," "Prayer of Columbus," "Locomotive," "Mystic Trumpeter," "Singer in Prison," "Burial Hymn of Lincoln," "Passage to India," "Proud Music of the Storm,"—in not one of these will you find a trace of the rude language and self-assertion that cropped out in most of his previous recitatives. But with these also disappears a certain measure of the magnificent health-spirit of the early poems: a pathologic element enters now,—lines sable and gules on the scutcheon; but is it really a loss? Is "The Merry Wives of Windsor" superior to "Lear," "The Princess" to "In Memoriam"?

There is something in the deep psychological suggestiveness and mystic obscurity of Whitman that affines him with Robert Browning.* Yet in all else they are at opposite poles. W. W. is autochthonic, ardently patriotic: B. drives his plough on foreign soil, is an expatriate by choice. W. is the poet of the heart, B. the poet of the head. The one sings himself (typical), the other never by any chance treats of himself. W. sings the average human being, triumphant, in harmony with the universe: B. (like Hawthorne) dashes on his crowded canvas picture after picture of exceptional men and women sinning, defeated, conquered by Fate, snared by Death's iron net

* Mr. Moncure Conway stated once in the *Round Table* that Browning read *Leaves of Grass* in Rome. However this may be, Whitman has stated that he never could read Browning, but thought he should have liked to if he had begun earlier in life!

("Sordello," "Pippa Passes," "Blot in the 'Scutcheon," "Childe Roland," "Bishop Blougram," etc.). Whitman's poems are spontaneous as sunlight: Browning's are superb intellectual *tours de force* (such of them as are readable or intelligible at all). Passionate, warm, alive, the stately procession throngs up out of the pit of oblivion at the beck of his hand: we wonder, we rack our brains over his psychic problems; but somehow the central core of human sympathy is not reached, the heart is rarely touched, the moral nature unfed. Browning is a cool analyst of mankind rather than an ardent lover. If he had only suffered and toiled and stood shoulder to shoulder with the plain people at some time in his life! To get the sharp antithesis between the atmospheres of Whitman and Browning, read together Whitman's "The City Dead House" and Browning's "Apparent Failure." The subject of each is the city morgue. Reading the American poem, you are melted to tears, your deepest sympathies are touched:—

> "Fair, fearful wreck—tenement of a soul . . .
> Take one breath from my tremulous lips,
> Take one tear dropt aside as I go for thought of you,
> Dead house of love."

If Browning were gazing on three fallen trees instead of the corpses of the three poor suicides, he ought to feel more heart-sorrow. There they lie, "enthroned each on his copper couch," silent, marble-browed, the sacredness of death upon all. How is it with you now, Robert Browning, "maker of plays"? Come, let us have your deepest, tenderest thought. And here it is: he thus speaks to one of the dead:—

> "What fancy was it turned your brain?
> Oh, women were the prize for you!
> Money gets women, cards and dice
> Get money, and ill-luck gets just
> The copper couch and one clear nice
> Cool squirt of water o'er your bust,
> The right thing to extinguish lust!"

Walt Whitman continually suggests another great humanitarian poet,—Victor Hugo. That which chiefly affines them is sympathy, compassion. To redeem our erring brothers by love, and not inflexible savage justice, is the message of each. Who is worthy to be placed beside these two as promulgators of the distinctive democratic ideas of these times,—the thirst for individual growth, space for the expansion of one's own soul, and equal rights before the law? In native qualities of soul Whitman and Hugo seem to me about on a par,—in moral endowment and in the quality of strength of thought. They have the same love of the sea and the immensities, and the same ingrained love of freedom. But Hugo inherited a literary power, and furnished himself with a literary equipment, much greater than that of the American. His enormous antiquarian acquisitions he shares with no other modern popular writer; but, as piled up in unreadable superfœtations in his books, they only weary the mind, never have the clear-cut beauty and repose of the Greeks. Hugo's aim is to astonish and overwhelm by the melodramatic, the terror of tragedy, the limning of the horrible and exceptional. His gloomy curtain of destiny is never withdrawn from the sky. But Whitman's atmospheres are, in the main, sunny and perfumed: he gladdens and strengthens, but never depresses, the soul. Both he and Hugo move the heart, renovate the moral sense, and lash vice and folly with knotted thongs. But H. accomplishes this by theatrical effect, W. by its very opposite. He makes his way at once to the heart, strips his speech of every particle of superfluous verbiage, seeks not to dazzle or terrify by the exceptional or horrible, but to exalt the average soul by showing it its own divinity, and calling upon it to mark the exquisite perfection of common things.

There are many who scornfully deny to Walt Whitman all title to greatness. The originality of his style, or atmosphere,

operates as a bar to their sympathy. But, contrary to the popular opinion, the criteria of all the fine arts, including poetry, are absolutely knowable and invariable, as also are the elements of greatness.

Among the latter generally is superb physical endowment. Whitman, like Goethe, had a noble physique,—never ill a day in his life until poisoned by hospital gangrene. His powerful magnetism he retained to the last.

Courage is another trait of a great man. In Whitman this is undoubted. He comes of brave stock,—horse-taming farmers, of gigantic frames and strong wills. His brother was one of the bravest officers in the war, as you would not doubt after looking into his eye. Of Walt Whitman, Dr. Bucke says he never knew him to show the slightest apprehension, though often placed in situations where such would have been manifested by most men. Of the courage required to brave scorn, ridicule, and hatred for nearly half a century, together with poverty, illness, and embezzlement of his copyrights, it is unnecessary to speak.

Great writing always embodies great strength. "If you want to tell good Gothic," says Ruskin, "see if it has the sort of roughness and largeness and nonchalance, mixed in places with the exquisite tenderness, which seems always to be the sign-manual of the broad vision and massy power of men who can see *past* the work they are doing, and betray here and there something like disdain for it." Genius always confronts the mystery of fate undaunted, but inferior men are mastered by it. Whitman's strength is supreme; his chariot creaks with the weight of an invisible God; he draws the bow of Ajax or of Rama, his arrows timbered for the loudest winds; he assimilates and fuses the wondrous facts of modern science. A man of nobler breed than his fellows, living always in high atmospheres, holding all that he writes close to nature, testing it by *al fresco* tests, shearing away with relentless knife all that

affronts "the exactness, vitality, impartiality, rectitude of the earth." Then his firmness, obstinacy: "If the single man plant himself indomitably on his instincts and there abide, the huge round world will come round to him."

Again, the master is known by the truthfulness and largeness of his handling. He depicts the great universal objects and passions,—man and nature, night, sleep, death, the sun and sky, love, sorrow and hope. He depicts impartially the evil and the good, regarding them from an altitude where they show, not in antinomy, but in harmonious balance, as shadow and substance, warp and woof, eternally correlative, and the one to the other forever necessary. The great bards know what humanity is in all its range, because they have come up out of its depths through suffering and struggle. The bases of their lives, like the strata of the high mountains, run down far beneath the surface. Whitman's breadth of handling reminds one of the sketch-frescos of Tintoret in the "Scuola di San Rocco." Seeing late in life the huge rock-piles, grim and red, of the Colorado mountains, the exclamation was forced from him that at last he had found the type and law of his mind. He found it also in the sea ("With Husky, Haughty Lips").

Reflection of nature at first hand and in original interpretations is a touchstone of highest art,—Homer, Burns, Scott; and in all these, as notably in Whitman, love of humanity is in healthful balance with love of nature. Whitman's nature-poems are like reflections of landscape and sky in pure water. He never tacks on to his singing-robes old spangles and gewgaws from the second-hand wardrobes of poetry. All his work has a pelagic atmosphere,—a dash of sea-brine and infinity. He knows the constellations by heart. A poetic presentation of the rushing of the earth through space appears for the first time in his well-known lines, "Tumbling on steadily, nothing dreading, sunshine, storm, cold, heat, withstanding, passing, carrying," etc.

The great poets last; you return to them again and again. Whitman belongs with a chosen half-dozen in this respect. In certain portions of his writings, beneath the deceptive simplicity of the envelope of words, lies an almost exhaustless profundity. *Leaves of Grass* is a work which you keep growing up to as long as you live. Read it now, and you comprehend and assimilate such and such things: open the pages four or five years afterwards, and, as you ponder certain poems previously passed carelessly over, suddenly there *grows out of the page*, slowly emerging, gradually unlimning, a vital and beautiful truth which will medicine and fibre your life.

The really great and good man is always loved by those nearest to him. He is a hero to his intimates. As Emerson was beloved by his neighbours, so was Walt Whitman, as we have seen in describing his funeral. During his life the young men of Camden formed a "Walt Whitman Club" in his honour, finding in his spoken and written words an inspiration and spur, as well as the lesson of self-respect. His appearances on the lecture platform in Camden were always greeted by warm and long-continued applause, and on the streets of that town a military company, as they passed the old man, once broke out into shouts of welcome.

Whitman's magnetic quality was peculiar. I never knew a person to meet him for the first time who did not come under its spell; most people going away in such a curious state of exaltation and excitement as to produce a partial wakefulness, the general feeling not wearing off for a fortnight. What extraordinary influence Goethe had on people is plainly seen in the case of Eckermann. This good man shows himself overcome, like a man in a dream, by some remark of Goethe, which to us seems quite commonplace. Evidently, personal magnetism is the explanation. Walt's magnetic power is felt in his writings in every page. Mr. T. W. Rolleston, in his German lecture on Whitman, given in Leipzig, speaks of the

"magical, indescribable personal influence" that streams forth from *Leaves of Grass*,—a fine compliment, coming from one who had never met him, and showing how well the poet has succeeded in expressing his soul through the desperately imperfect media of types and paper.

Closely allied with the magnetic quality is sympathy. That is a pretty incident told of Anaxagoras, that he asked the Lampsacenes his townsmen, to celebrate the day of his death by making it forever a holiday in the public schools of the city. Similarly, it is written of Empedocles of Agrigentum that he spent his fortune in dowering young girls and marrying them to men of wealth and consequence. Leonardo da Vinci sowed good deeds along his pathway. It is known that he often purchased birds of the dealers, that he might immediately give them their liberty. The generosity of Rubens to contemporary artists was profuse. Turner hoarded money all his life, that he might at death bestow it in noble charity; and his disciple, Ruskin, is one of the most lavish benefactors of England. So was Whitman in proportion to his means. His life was spent in good deeds and charities: nursing soldiers (a hundred thousand in all, it is calculated), hoarding his narrow means in Washington to expend it on the sick and suffering, making his annual presents of gloves to the car-drivers, always in Camden having several invalids on his list of persons to be helped, etc. (This benevolence was inherited, probably, from his Quaker ancestry.) It is said that an insane woman was once restored to her senses at the sight of Niagara Falls. Of this nature has been the influence of Whitman upon many a seared and defiant heart, poor fugitives from justice often flying to him for words of comfort and advice. His words were charged with love as the sky with light. "He was not proud of his songs, but of the measureless ocean of love within him, and freely poured it forth." As a final test of his possession of true sympathy is to

be mentioned the invariable love of little children for Whitman, alluded to by all who have known him and written of him.

The prime mark of native breeding and high birth is, as Ruskin so thoroughly shows, Sensitiveness, Sensibility. The first mark of a gentleman, he says, is fine and delicate bodily senses: Dr. Bucke notes (what no reader of Whitman's prose nature-studies, or of such poems of his as "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking," needs to be told) the exceptional acuteness of his senses. A gentleman is also delicate in his language and thought: Mr. Conway, who bathed with Whitman at Coney Island, speaks (*Fortnightly*, '66, p. 544), of his "surprising delicacy" of act and word. Says John Burroughs (*Lippincott's Magazine*, June, 1893), "During nearly thirty years of acquaintance with him, I never heard an unseemly word or indelicate allusion or story pass his lips." Dr. Bucke, in whose house Whitman lived for months, says, "He never in conversation, in company, or under any circumstances uses language that could be thought indelicate." I, who have had many confidential *tête-à-têtes* with the poet, can testify to the same thing. As an artist in words, Whitman does not deal in minute and delicate finish, but the perfumed delicacy of his soul nevertheless saturates every page in the shape of sympathetic and emotional thought. His voice was the kindest I ever heard,—musical, magnetic, and pleasant.

Another mark of a gentleman, says Ruskin, is that he is open, frank, and confiding; while your small vulgar man is always cautious, suspicious, non-committal. Walt Whitman was as naïve as a child, and his confiding trust in men was repaid by the embezzlements of the proceeds of the sale of his books by New York scoundrels. Yet the profoundest men sometimes find it necessary to be reserved and even to dissemble in the presence of those who cannot understand them. A gentleman, says Ruskin, is always truthful where possible, does not cunningly seek opportunity for deceiving, and yet may some-

times be obliged to deceive for the good of others. This is the noble and straightforward lie of the Greeks. So Landor remarks: "A powerful man often dissembles: he stands erect in the course of glory, with open brow, but with breath suppressed." But the feeble and mean mind *simulates*,—a very different thing from dissembling. The base man will deceive for the sake of injuring others: the noble man will sometimes dissemble and deceive for the sake of benefiting others. And, finally, as thoughtful scholars know, the great poets have always shrouded their highest revelations in the language of mystery, which is what I mean by noble dissembling.

Walt Whitman has often been accused of lacking humour, which is conceived (and rightly) to be an indispensable element in the make-up of a universal mind. It is very natural that those who know the author of *Leaves of Grass* only through that work should think him devoid of humour, just as we cannot conceive from reading Dante's poem that he possessed any humour, or from reading "Paradise Lost" that Milton possessed it. Yet I have no doubt that Dante and Milton had a comfortable supply of that lubricant, as everybody who knows Walt Whitman personally, or has read his nature-notes in *Specimen Days*, certainly recognizes that he has. Says Walt's friend, Col. James M. Scovel: "His fund of good humour has carried him over a thousand rough places in life. He has a keen sense of humour, and possesses a [traveller's] fund of anecdotes" (Camden *Post*, April 22, 1885). (See also Dr. Bucke, pp. 63 and 104, for further written testimony.) As an explanation of the absence of humour in the great poems of Dante, Milton, Wordsworth, and Whitman, ponder these words of Jean Paul Richter: "Only from tragedy does a cross-lane lead over to comedy, but not from the epic; in short, man can laugh after *tender*, but not after *exalting* emotion."

Lastly, the great authors always know their own merits. They are always, at bottom, both egoists and egotists, and have

a right to be. They reverence themselves just as they reverence every other created thing. I believe Ruskin is wrong when he affirms that the least touch of self-complacency is enough to mark a writer or artist as second-rate. The great workers, he says, do their work, and say nothing about it; their productions are signalized by a vast impersonalism. I do not know upon what authors he can truthfully base such an assertion. It seems to be pretty thoroughly proved that the Homeric poems are a collection of national ballads, in which of course we should look for no personalism. Dante is the central figure of his great poem; Goethe's immense egotism appears on almost every page of Eckermann's "Reminiscences"; Montaigne is the hero of his immortal "Essays"; Scott depicts himself in the "Antiquary"; Carlyle, in "Sartor Resartus." Albert Dürer said to one who objected to something in his work, "Sir, it cannot be better done." When you bring Mr. Ruskin's statement into court, you find that the only writer with "a vast impersonalism" is Shakspere. But can you make yourself believe that, simply because by its nature dramatic writing does not permit the author's self to appear, Shakspere differed from all the rest of mankind in having no self-regard, no egotism? Most emphatically I cannot. The Sonnets express the most towering egotism:

> "Not marble, nor the gilded monuments
> Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme" (LIV.).

> "Sin of self-love possesseth all mine eye
> And all my soul and all my every part" (LXII.).

Compare also Sonnets LXXXI., CI., CIV., and CVII. If Shakespere had had his Boswell or Eckermann, who knows what further revelations of self-complacency we might have had? Who would have suspected from Goethe's poems, merely, that he was so devoured with egotism?

As for Whitman and America, is there any good reason why a man living in a new country, with little or no storied past

to inspire him, should not be permitted to select his own personality (typical) as the centre around which to group the maze of events? Arabian poetry, says Lyall, in his "Translations of Ancient Arabian Poetry"—published some few years ago—is not epic nor dramatic, nor even to be described as wholly narrative or idyllic. "The Arabian ode sets before us a series of pictures, drawn with confident skill and first-hand knowledge, of the life its maker lived, of the objects among which he moved, of his horse, his camel, the wild creatures of the wilderness, of the landscape in the midst of which his life and theirs was set; but all, however loosely they seem to be bound together, are subordinate to one dominant idea, which is the poet's unfolding of himself, his admirations and his hates, his prowess and the freedom of his spirit." And adds Mr. Lyall, "Arabian poetry is not of the kind which seeks to give form to the supra-sensual, which brings before us many-coloured stories, or casts a poetic light on a rich circle of thought: it is a poetry which makes it its main business to depict life and nature as they are, with little addition of fantasy."

James Russell Lowell truthfully says of Dante ("the central man of all the world"), "All his writings are autobiographic, and all of them are parts of a mutually related system, of which the central point is the individuality and experience of the poet."

There is a passage in Montaigne that would seem to have been written by Walt himself in a previous state of existence, so close does it come to his own theory. I refer to the preface to Montaigne's "Essays," where he says: "I desire therein to be delineated in mine owne genuine simple and ordinarie fashion, without contention, art, or study; for it is myselfe I pourtray. My imperfections shall therein be read to the life, and my naturall forme discerned, so farr-forth as publike reverence hath permitted me. For if my fortune had beene to have lived among those nations which yet are said to live under the

sweet liberty of Nature's first and uncorrupted lawes, I assure thee I would most willingly have pourtrayed myselfe fully and naked. Thus, gentle Reader, myselfe am the ground-worke of my booke."

And says Kant: "There is a spectacle grander than the ocean, and that is the conscience; there is a spectacle grander than the sky, and it is the interior of the soul. To write the poem of the human conscience, were the subject only one man, and he the lowest of men, would be reducing all epic poems into one supreme and final epos."

We need not, then, be at pause on account of Walt Whitman's egoism or even egotism. This much only it imports us to remember: that there is a vast difference between noble egotism and mean vanity. In *Leaves of Grass* the greater part of what seems to be egotism is only the personalism of one who continually asserts himself to be typical of the average man. It behooves one who believes in the nobility of all men to assume a proud self-confidence.

Of his inherent modesty proofs might be multiplied. His praise of other poets, his contemporaries, is warm and earnest. He said to Dr. Bucke: "I often have to be quite vehement with my friends to convince them that I am not (and don't want to be) singular, exceptional, or eminent. I am willing to think I represent vast averages, and the generic American masses—that I am their voice; but not that I should be in any sense an exception to ordinary men" ("Walt Whitman," p. 66). There is in the 1876 edition of his poems (Vol. i. p. 369) a little stanza called "After an Interval," expressing his joy in his songs, that they were standing so well the test of death and night (the death of many friends, including his mother and sister, who had departed in 1872). In the 1882 edition this stanza is omitted, as savouring too much of self-confidence, and partly, perhaps, because the mock-friendly critics at home and abroad always pounced upon it for quotation. In the *Critic* for Jan. 5, '84,

he says that he considers his work all an experiment, and that his friends claim for him far more than he should dare to accept, adding these words about the artistic form of his verse. "Whether my friends claim it for me or not, I feel certain that in respect to pictorial talent, description, dramatic situations, and especially in verbal melody and all the conventional technique of poetry, not only the divine work already alluded to [that of Shakspere, Hugo, Tennyson, Emerson, and others], but dozens more, transcend (some of them immeasurably transcend) all I have done or could do."

And here are utterances from his poems in the same strain—

"Poets to come! . . .
What is the little I have done except to arouse you?
I but write one or two indicative words for the future;
I but advance a moment, only to wheel and hurry back in the darkness."

"All I have done I would cheerfully give to be trodden under foot, if it might only be the soil of superior poems."

"I am the teacher of athletes.
He that by me spreads a wider breast than my own proves the width of my own;
He most honours my style who learns under it to destroy the teacher."

In his "Fancies at Navesink" (*Nineteenth Century*, August, 1885) he speaks of his

"Three-score years of life summ'd up, and more, and past,
By any grand ideal tried, intentionless, the whole a nothing,
And haply yet some drop within God's scheme's ensemble—some wave or part of wave,
Like one of yours, ye multitudinous ocean."

Of course, Whitman has faults, and grave ones. His strong, stubborn nature had in it "hot blood and fighting qualities," the elements of evil latent, but subdued. His egotism (not that of his books, but of his private life) was rather repellent at times to his friends; but you can find out for yourself the

faults of this naïve character. They are all open to the light. He never hid them. The Longinidæ have always been eager to prick down his faults, in the performance of which they show themselves as intoxicated with vanity and self-esteem as the Ramayana's monkeys with the honey of the garden of Sugriva. But they might have spared themselves the trouble. Whitman sprinkles confession drops all through his poems :—

"Nor do those know me best who admire me and vauntingly praise me."

"I call to the world to distrust the accounts of my friends, but listen to my enemies, as I myself do."

"I am he who knew what it was to be evil,
I too knitted the old knot of contrariety,
Blabb'd, blush'd, resented, lied, stole, grudg'd,
Had guile, anger, lust, hot wishes I dared not speak,
Was wayward, vain, greedy, shallow, sly, cowardly, malignant," etc.

Read also his "O Poverties' Wincings," and "O Living Always." "'Tis difficult to find greatness pure," says some one; but I find in this very circumstance the chief value of a great man. He is not to be rejected because his thoughts do not fit our moulds. "One who surpasses his fellow-citizens in virtue," says Aristotle, "is no longer a part of the city. Their law is not for him, since he is a law to himself." And Mr. John Morley remarks, apropos of Rousseau: "There is no more rash idea of the right composition of a society than one which leads us to denounce a type of character for no better reason than that, if it were universal, society would go to pieces." In other words, the great man must be accepted as he is, and make the best you can of him, get what you can out of him for your little moral systems and thumb rules of action."

The problem involved in Whitman's "Children of Adam" poems is so thoroughly treated by himself in his prose writings that it is too late in the day to attempt to show its nobility of

design and necessity in the ensemble of his work, the very keystone of his system of optimistic philosophy. A few points, however, may be touched upon.

And, first, the suppression of his poems by the legal authorities of Massachusetts. I unearthed in 1885 the interior history of that pitiful business. It was the preachers of Boston upon whom is to be fixed the disgrace of suppressing the publication of *Leaves of Grass*. It was the Rev. James Harlan who turned Walt Whitman out of office in Washington, in 1865, for being the author of *Leaves of Grass*, and it was the Rev. Baylies Allen, assistant pastor of Trinity Church, who suppressed it in Boston in 1882. And no wonder, for the wormy anti-naturalism and asceticism they represent are in deadly opposition to the glad belief in nature of Walt Whitman. If Whitman is true, the ascetics are wrong. It was not Attorney-General Marston of Massachusetts (nor District Attorney Stevens who served notice on Osgood & Co.) who is the real culprit in the *Leaves of Grass* suppression, but the Society for the Suppression of Vice in Boston. Among the vice-presidents and directors of the society were the late Phillips Brooks, Edward Everett Hale, Noah Porter (deceased), and Julius H. Seelye, all doctors of divinity.

Mounting one day to the office of District Attorney Stevens in the top story of the Old Court House in Boston, I was courteously received by that gentleman, an amiable, generous-souled fellow, with heavy-lidded eyes, white hair, and a very pleasing address. I am satisfied that he and Walt Whitman would have been capital friends. But he told me he had never read *Leaves of Grass*, beyond the few passages picked out by the informer or complainant; and he said he served his notice upon Messrs. Osgood & Co. (requesting them either to expurgate the book or withdraw it from circulation) without clearly knowing what he was doing. His action was only perfunctory. If Osgood & Co. had not weakly yielded, the matter would have been brought before a jury, and the pure and remedial intent of the

poems explained. Mr. Stevens regretted his carelessness and precipitation, and said he had since exercised greater vigilance. He told me who it was lodged the complaint: it was the Vice Society mentioned, by their agent, a melancholy, down-in-the-mouth, groaning-Methodist, kill-joy fellow, with whom I also talked, and who grew quite furious over the baseness of the "Children of Adam" poems. If his society had brains enough to distinguish between great classic literature and obscene and deadly books and pictures, it would be one of the noblest of agencies. But, as it is, its one idiotic act in the matter of this book has more than neutralized what little good it has done. One of the objects sought to be accomplished by the worthy gentlemen of this society (see their report, 1884-85) was the suppression of skating rinks, because cases of seduction had been traced back to acquaintanceships formed there! Why not suppress high schools, then, and turn all public gatherings into Shaker meetings, with the sexes on different sides of the room? Why not introduce the French system of girl-life at once, and trust no young people alone? How false and impure and narrow all this seems!

The chief regret of Rev. Baylies Allen, as I talked with him, seemed to be that the book had been advertised more widely than ever by the attempt to suppress it (which was true, for by it Walt Whitman received enough money to buy his Camden house: persecution in this case was a boomerang). He had evidently hoped, as did the editor of the *Literary World* (June 3, 1882), that the suppression might have been without publicity. He said they did not think the book was insidious, it was only gross; "still, it seemed best to remove it from circulation." And you can hardly blame this good man when you come to read in the Book of Common Prayer of the exceeding vileness of the body and the extreme sinfulness and baseness of the passion of love.

In 1881 I wrote from Philadelphia to John Burroughs as follows: —

"You say Whitman speaks not as the conventional man, but as the eternal abysmic man (in his Adamitic poems). I say that, if he is anything, he is by avowal and unquestionably a writer for the great body of men, and not an esoteric philosopher or physiological writer; and he does not reach his own ideal if he fails to be popular. Now he has written a few things that are anachronistic, things that it is enough to refute you to say you would not write yourself. These few lines, like the fly in the ointment, diffuse a bad odor through all the rest. . . Certainly, so long as we are limited human beings, that do not take as much pleasure in ordure as we do in bread and flowers, any realistic description of the odor, color, etc., of the excrements and secretions of the body will not be considered by us as even agreeable, much less as poetry."

The fallacy of these utterances lies in their assumption that the rapt pantheistic poet may not introduce any topic whatever into his pages, provided his drift and aim be profound and religious. What I wrote to Mr. Burroughs is true thus far,— that the realistic descriptions alluded to would indeed be terribly mistaken if made by a frivolous or minor poet, whose soul was not consecrated to sublime ends, and whose purpose was not plainly remedial and ethic. Viewed, however, from the supra-human standpoint, the plane of Absolute Being, it seems to me that nothing in *Leaves of Grass* can be considered objectionable. Furthermore, I think that the topics introduced into the "Children of Adam" poems are at first repulsive to us simply from their strangeness: they have never before been seen in print. But what is the spirit in which we should approach a new and startling fact, as broached by a great thinker? Shall we angrily reject it because of its unintelligibility and offensiveness? Shall we not rather say: "This matter is at present outside of my sympathies and comprehension:

good. It is probable or possible that I can now enlarge my range of thought. It is almost certain that by patiently studying these new ideas I shall be able to remove certain constitutional limitations of my nature." Yet it is rare that any of us meet hostile ideas in this spirit.

There still remain to be considered two formidable objections to Whitman's passional poems. The first is that they seem to offend our instinct of silence and delicacy; they utter in cold blood what is the natural accompaniment of passion, and what is generally best unuttered: love must be atmosphered with the sentiment of chivalry and poetry, in order that the animal instincts be somewhat masked; but Whitman gives us, in that terrible, naked, Greek diction of his, the purely physiological element of love, in chants that cannot be read alone in a mixed company. There is truth in these points; and Whitman himself has admitted that he has two or three times had "qualms" over the sex-poems,* probably for the very reasons just enumerated. But it must be remembered that the poems were not written to be spouted as orations or to be read aloud in any company: they were written for individual perusal, and with the distinct and sole purpose of strengthening and medicining diseased minds; they partake of the nature of a confidential talk between a physician and his patient, a father and his sons, or a mother and her daughters, and to the pure mind their physiological purity is absolute. They need not be, and probably never will be, imitated by any less strong writer. They must not be dwelt on, or exaggerated out of their due relation to the rest of the work. It is well that the topic of sex be once thus thoroughly treated by a strong and influential mind, and there an end be made. Nor should any one imagine that because these sex-chants, written with didactic purpose, offend as a medicine offends, therefore their author is incapable of the

* "Specimen Days and Collect," p. 191.

tenderest and delicatest sentiment of love. The poignant trembling passion in which the poem "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" is steeped is proof ample that Whitman had a nature as refined as Tennyson's. (With what a strange sweet fire that carol of love and death thrills our nerves!—a dream under the stars of a region where love, friendship, and death merge into one, like drops of dew in a rose).

The other objection to be considered is that in the poems "Children of Adam" there is perceptible the fire and glow of sensual passion; that their author was in his youth not unchargeable with the escapades of a Mirabeau ("flower of the wild Riquetti kindred"), and that his earlier recitatives have a decided smack of even the Squire Western and Roderick Random type of man, and that therefore he was not just the ideal man for a moral reform. But why not? Have not all great souls sinned and been forgiven? What do you say of Bunyan, of John B. Gough? What of Father Taylor, of Boston? Is not the very highest value of Whitman his astounding honesty and frankness? his determination to limn for once a typical man, sins, virtues, and all? It is not a god who was tempted, yet without sin, who is of avail to us in our own struggles for righteousness, but *one who has been tempted, fallen, and risen superior to his fault,* conquered it once and forever. Every true poet is endowed with a tremendous emotional nature. And are not the passions and emotions inseparably correlated by the nervous system? Do you expect to get the rich spices and perfumes of the tropics from the bleak soil of Labrador, or the sultry passion of the South out of the soul of a Greenlander? When the venerable black mother, the Nile, comes on full-breasted and high, overflooding the plains, she may break away here and there the field-dyke of some poor fellah, yet carries in her arms the life-giving nutriment that will feed a nation with bread. Before the slow roll of the majestic river of the

plains come the toss and turbulence, the fume and fret, of the mountain stream.

Whitman shall be allowed, as other great poets, the faults and limitations of his youth. He shall not be apologized for any more than a tornado or a bison or an eagle is apologized for. No one ever noticed a striking resemblance between a preacher and a cumulus cloud, or between a schoolmaster and Mount Chimborazo. We do not class these things together, and there is no need of censuring Walt Whitman because he does not resemble Cardinal Manning or Dr. Torquemada Shedd. Let it be our pride to praise and defend this national poet, whose writings are far purer than the recorded words of such men as Solomon, Herodotus, Juvenal, Lucretius, Shakspere, Montaigne, Cervantes, Rabelais, Swedenborg, Swift, Goethe, Byron, Burns, Béranger, Hugo, or Abraham Lincoln, and who towers up above all his contemporaries in the moral courage which braved scorn, life-poverty, suffering, defeat, and death, only that he might medicine his people to their good, lift up the men and women he loved to purer thought and life, and deeper pride in themselves—their sacred bodies.

Hegel, in the introduction to his "Lectures on the Philosophy of History," speaking of those great men whose own particular aims involve those large issues which are the will of the World-Spirit, says: "They may be called heroes, inasmuch as they have derived their purposes and their vocation, not from the calm, regular course of things, sanctioned by the existing order, but from a concealed fount—one which has not attained to phenomenal, present existence—from that inner spirit, still hidden beneath the surface, which, impinging on the outer world as on a shell, bursts it in pieces, because it is another kernel than that which belonged to the shell in question." "It is possible," he continues, "that a World-Historical individual may treat other great, even sacred interests, inconsiderately; conduct which is indeed obnoxious to moral reprehension. But

so mighty a form must trample down many an innocent flower, crush to pieces many an object in its path."

The symmetry and completeness of *Leaves of Grass* as a complete picture of life would be fatally injured by an omission of the chief matter of life; namely, sex and its corollaries. If it were possible to hurl to the surface of Mars, for the inspection of its supposed inhabitants, copies in hieroglyphics of the works of Homer, Dante, Shakspere, Emerson, Whittier, Longfellow, and Whitman, what idea is it likely the Martians would obtain of our Terrene society from said works? In Homer they would see groups of knights and gods in the sweat and dust of conflict, and would note many sweet pictures of rural life glimpsed in the intervals of battle. In Dante's book they would find a superb imagination, and passionate hatred and love, dominated by religion; in Shakspere,—chief of poets,—a complete picture of society as an aristocracy; in Emerson, compact ethic aphorisms, transcendent philosophy, and exquisite nature-eidullia; in Whittier, tender ballad-stories, flaming love of liberty, and childlike religious trust; in Longfellow, gentle scholar-lore, graceful song, and quiet sleepy pictures of bygone days. But in not one of these representative poets would the Martians be able to find a complete picture of humanity as a whole, of society in all its phases, and the world in all its sweep of landscape and oceanic spread. In not one of the American poets I have so far characterised would they find even a fragmentary picture of the American people in all the amplitude of its wars, pioneering, daily domestic life and commerce. Except from a few poems of Whittier, and a few lines here and there in the works of the other American poets, the puzzled Martians would be unable to make out so much as the form of our government, let alone the national traits and peculiarities of character, our central aim, our place in the line of progress, and our achievements in the material arts of life. And as for the master passion—love—and its accompanying

result, the perpetuation of the species, the Martians could not get a glimmer of information as to its basic element, its physical correlative, ramifying, as that does in its influences, outward and upward through the entire nervous, emotional, and spiritual nature of man. But in Whitman's world-epic they would find the most ample description of our republican polity; all its activities, rural and urban, its institutions, religion, philosophy, joys and wars, with vigorous vignette color-sketches of army and hospital life in the middle of the nineteenth century, all held in solution by profound compassion and love. And they would also find a key-treatment of the body,—a master's sculpturesque chiselling,—and they would doubtless duly appreciate and respect the masculine touch.

When Michelangelo had finished his sublime fresco of "The Last Judgment," a great hue and cry was raised over the nudity of the figures. It is an exact counterpart of the Adamitic frescoes of Walt Whitman and their reception by the prudes of this day. Both these masters, treating man in art from the point of view of the absolute, strip him of his rags of sham, and show him as the universe made him. Da Volterra was hired to paint breeches around the figures of "The Last Judgment," and spoiled their colour scheme; and Walt Whitman is presented to the world in petty castrated anthologies suitable for Sunday-school use.

The ambiguity of phrase in the latter half of Whitman's "Lines to a Common Prostitute" should be read very carefully, with collation of other passages on the same theme, and with reference to the general principles informing the whole work. The whole matter was set at rest by Whitman himself (who so seldom explains his writing) when he told Mrs. Angela T. Heywood of Princeton, New Jersey (see her leaflet published in 1882 in that town), "It is nothing but the beautiful little idyl of the New Testament," at the same time quoting the passage about the woman taken in adultery,

—"But Jesus stooped down and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not," etc. There are precisely the same Pharisees now as then. Two thousand years has not advanced the race one iota Christward, apparently.

The idea of the poem is compassion, charity; let him that is without sin cast the first stone. "I judge you not as the judge judges, but as the sun falling round a helpless thing" (*Leaves of Grass*). Others make criminal appointments with you, and now *I* make an appointment with you; my charity for you is as wide as the sky, as deep as God's love. I do not hesitate to see you and converse with you, any more than I refuse to see and converse with the young man who has deeply sinned. "Who am I that I should call you more obscene than myself" ("You Felons on Trial in Courts," p. 298). I find in myself the same impulses to evil that are in you: "henceforth I will not deny you; for how can I deny myself?" (*Leaves of Grass*, p. 299). This, it is clear on the face of them, is the meaning of the lines; and I base my opinion, first, on the broad truth that in all the rest of the thousands and thousands of lines written by Whitman there is not a single immoral word set down, nor a single immoral sentiment conveyed. Then is it probable there would be in this case? Second, I find this nobler interpretation justified by illustrative passages from other parts of *Leaves of Grass*. In "Song of Myself" (§ 15, p. 41) there is a picture of a poor degraded prostitute, with the crowd laughing and winking to each other; but the poet says,—

> "Miserable! I do not laugh at your oaths nor jeer you."

In § 19 of the same poem he proclaims that his words are for all, "the wicked the same as the righteous, I make appointments with all"; my words are meat for souls, and the table is equally set; none are excluded from the sunshine of my love, compassion, and reverence.

"The kept-woman, sponger, thief, are hereby invited ;—
The heavy-lipp'd slave is invited, the venerealee is invited ;
There shall be no difference between them and the rest."

After I had myself worked out the above interpretation of this poem, I found that William D. O'Connor (in the *Round Table*, Feb. 16, '67), had given the same essential idea. Mr. O'Connor goes so far as to think that the "appointment" of the lines is an appointment for the superior life,—the immortal life. "Recognizing her as a sister in humanity, but separated from her, as a person of lofty and delicate life must be separated from one whose mortal ways are uncleanly and loathly, he foresees the triumph of the essential good of human nature in her is so assured that they cannot be thus separated for ever. Her existence is made up of many mournful and evil meetings ; and using this circumstance as the metaphor of his poetry, overflowing the foul fact with new and sacred gold, he makes with her his divine appointment for the superior life."

If there still remain a shade of doubt in anyone's mind, let him read Whitman's touching poem, "The City Dead House," before alluded to :—

"That wondrous house—that delicate fair house—that ruin !
That immortal house more than all the rows of dwellings ever built !
Or white-domed capital with majestic figure surmounted, or all the old high-spired cathedrals,
That little house alone more than them all—poor, desperate house !
Fair, fearful wreck—tenement of a soul—itself a soul,
Unclaim'd, avoided house—take one breath from my tremulous lips,
Take one tear dropt aside as I go for thought of you,
Dead house of love—house of madness and sin, crumbled, crush'd,
House of life erewhile talking and laughing—but ah, poor house, dead even then,
Months, years, an echoing, garnish'd house—but dead, dead, dead."

Considered as a political gospel, *Leaves of Grass*, and its correlative volume "Specimen Days and Collect," incarnate

the supreme aspiration of the age—Democracy; in them speaks the voice of the common people; they are the passionate cry of "*l'homme qui rit*" in the Parliament House of the world, the thought of the uprisen third estate at last articulate in literature. It is now some 250 years since the idea of genuine democracy was for the first time put to practical test on the shores of Massachusetts by an English-speaking colony. In America Democracy was born, and in America Democracy's first poet, Walt Whitman. The masses had never had a great poet until he appeared—unless we except Burns, whose exquisite heart-lyrics can hardly be compared with Whitman's massive works. As T. W. Rolleston says, Whitman is the first appearance in literature of the genuinely democratic spirit.

How the democratic spirit grows and grows in spite of open and concealed hostility! How imbedded it is in the Saxon bone and thew! Mr. Henry Cabot Lodge, in his "Short History of the English Colonies in America," records (p. 473) a little incident which, occurring long before the French Revolution, shows how the seed of the Cromwellian Revolution had taken root in America. As early as the first quarter of the eighteenth century the Governor of Massachusetts and his son one day met some carts in a narrow road, and the teamsters not showing great alacrity in giving way, the Governor and his son alighted, and drew their swords upon them (reminds you of "Œdipus.") The parties soon came to blows. "I am as good flesh and blood as you are!" said one of the carters as he closed with the Governor and broke his sword. The carters were arrested, and pursued with a bitter spirit of revenge by the humiliated Governor. But they were acquitted. The head of the Commonwealth was powerless against them, for their action was sustained by public opinion. I imagine that "old Walt" would have been as tickled by this story as he was to learn that Napoleon at St. Helena had to have his old uniform turned and revamped; and I am sure he would have approved

the action of that Roman shoemaker who was in the habit of beating out his leather on a marble bust of one of the old emperors which he had placed before the door of his shop. (An ugly set of fellows, those emperors, with their villanous low brows, as you look at their busts, all in a row, in the museums.)

The democratic spirit grows, but it is slow in gaining the belief of the higher classes. The "cultivated" can scarcely conceal their ridicule for one who, like Whitman, really believes in democracy with all his soul. It is not the cultured class, it is not Emerson or Bryant or Ticknor, who have vital faith in the people, in self-government; but it is men of heroic stuff, sprung from the toilers, men upon whom the "burden of the Lord" is laid,—such as Peter Cooper, Theodore Parker, Abraham Lincoln, Henry Wilson, John Brown. They are very counter-types of the Goethe and Emerson variety of man; and as citizens they are their superiors.

It seems to me that in this man, Walt Whitman, and *in him alone as yet*, exists the great catholic soul capable of fusing the continental Republic of States into a compact, organic, indissoluble Nation.

> "Great! for he spoke and the people heard,
> And his eloquence caught like a flame from zone to zone of the world,
> Till his Word had won him a noble name."

Common principles alone are the cement of States. Love is the only lasting tie; and alone the great poet-savior of a race,

> "Soul of love and tongue of fire!
> Eye to pierce the deepest deeps and sweep the world!"

speaking the simple speech of all hearts, can enter those hearts, and unite them by a bond subtle yet strong, a tie forever infrangible by any power on earth. The permanent union of all the States of the Union was a cause that lay very near Whitman's heart. He expressed this solidarity—that he so wistfully yearned to preserve by the word *ensemble*.

Walt Whitman's idealistic Hegelian philosophy chimes well with his democratic instincts and teachings. For if Nature, including mankind, is the incarnation of the Absolute, then the brotherhood of men and the abolition of arbitrary distinctions irresistibly follow, just as monarchy and the papacy are the logical outgrowth of the Hebraic monotheism.

The question might be raised whether the communistic—and, in part, almost anarchic—sentiments of Whitman may not hereafter be productive of dangerous uprisings among the people. The unrest of individuals and classes is so great now that any stimulus of that tendency is perhaps ill-advised. However this may be, it is certain that *Leaves of Grass* contains its own corrective. The Bibles of the world have always been ill-starred armories whence weapons have been drawn for the worst and wildest programmes. But it has not been the fault of the Bibles. The cementing doctrine of comradeship, the pervasive moral tone, religious faith, and passion for political union in Whitman's prose and poetry dominate everything else.

When I call Whitman the poet of the masses, I do not assert that he is, or is likely to be, the favorite of the very ignorant classes: he has not been clapper-clawed with the palms of the vulgar. But he is the representative of cultivated mechanics, and of the intelligent middle class, such as this country alone in the world is producing in magnificent profusion. He is also accepted enthusiastically by the highest minds that spring out of the said middle class. Whatever has been asserted to the contrary, there is not a single poem or page of *Leaves of Grass* that need be unintelligible to any mechanic or wide-awake farmer who possesses a library of a dozen or so of volumes. In fact, there are only a very few mystical pieces that cannot be understood and enjoyed by any man or woman of mature life who has learned to read and think. The proletariat class, fed on trashy, pathologic, two-cent literature, has no taste for any pure and earnest thought; and it is absurd to reproach the

bard of Manahatta because he does not reach this unfortunate class. There is a humorous poem by Prof. Henry A. Beers (the "Holiday Eclogue") which accurately gauges the depth of the average unskilled laborer's mind and echoes his very language: —

Second Mason.

"D'ye mind the students down in the grove,
Drinking their wine and beer?
That's an easy life they lead.

First Mason.

"So do we up here,
When the weathercock points west,
And the look-off's clear.

Third Mason.

"House-top Jim's the boy for work!

First Mason.

"True for you, my dear!
(*Whistles 'The Girl I left behind me.'*)

. . . . . .

Third Mason.

"Oh! it's hungry that I am with working in the wind,
But there's a shawl and bonnet—below there: do you mind?
It's Molly with the dinner-pail; she's coming in the door.
Faith, my belly thinks my throat is cut this half an hour and more."

There you have it,—poetry accurately adapted to the ignorant laborer's comprehension. How do you like it? Is that the kind of poetry you want a true democratic bard to write? Or will you not rather admit that for the lowest class no thoughtful and elevated poetry at all can be written?

Few things in the history of literature are more amusing than the precipitous manner in which the critic fry rushed pell-mell into the trap laid for them by cunning "old Walt" back there in '55. The shrewder thinkers, such as Emerson, saw at once that such writing was the outcome of profound thought.

The tyro in literature nearly always writes with painful and cautious imitation of the approved style: the courage of non-conformity comes late. But the wise newspaper hee-hawers of New York, London, and Boston, thought that in Whitman they had discovered a shirt-sleeve barbarian, not seeing that his rudeness was profound art. "Come," they cried, "this fellow is, by avowal, a poet of the masses, and is always decrying culture, and yet writes above the comprehension of his audience?" It is true that in his earlier writings he was perhaps a little too pronounced against culture, birth, and breeding, and drew too flattering a picture of his "femme" democracy, and of the average laboring class. Dissent generally strikes too hard in its eagerness to make sure of its new position. In the early days of his self-assertion Whitman looked as askant on culture as Landor's Pericles on the Athenian aristocracy: —

"Aspasia! as you are cautious not to look earnestly at a handsome man, but rather turn your eyes another way, so must I do in regard to Aristocracy. It is not proper I should discover any charms in her."

But later his opinions were modified,—perhaps, as he slyly suggests, "as the result of advancing age, or the reflections of invalidism"; and he came to regard the study of Old-World literatures as needful to complement our Western rawness and practicality: "The New World fuses with the Old, and is but the same subject continued."

Whitman once remarked to me that it gave him not the least concern that he was charged with not being yet accepted by the class he set out to address. For, if it were true (said he), it would not matter: the work stands there on its own merits, and is the expression of what an American in the nineteenth century thought about society, politics, love, friendship, God, and immortality.

A more plausible accusation might be, and has been, made against him respecting the too frequent outcropping of democratic didacticism and theory in his work. I would not on

this account affirm, with Mr. Stedman, that Whittier is a truer and more artless poet of the people than the Manhattanese. The productions of the storm and stress period of Whittier's life, as in the precisely parallel period of Whitman's life, are groaning with anti-slavery and religious didacticism. Both poets rise superior to this element in the work of their riper years. Swinburne, in a pamphlet called "Under the Microscope," has used the sharp lancet upon Whitman, summing up all that is needful to say under this head: "What comes forth out of the abundance of his heart rises at once from that high heart to the lips on which its thoughts take fire, and the music which rolls from them rings true as fine gold and perfect. What comes forth by the dictation of doctrinal theory serves only to twist aside his hand and make the written words run foolishly awry. What he says is well said when he speaks as of himself, and because he cannot choose but speak, whether he speak of a small bird's loss, or of a great man's death, of a nation rising for battle, or of a child going forth in the morning. What he says is not well said when he speaks not as though he must, but as though he ought,—as though it behooved one who would be the poet of American democracy to do this thing or to do that thing if the duties of that office were to be properly fulfilled, the tenets of that religion worthily delivered." Whitman's beautiful democratic poems of friendship * a thousand times offset any tendency to affect the *rôle* of democrat which may be noticeable in his early poems. A genuine lover speaks in the Calamus pieces: a great

* And with the poems of friendship must go the sinewy and electric war-poems as expressions of the spirit of love and reconciliation. Instead of regarding, as some have done, these psalms of conflict and death as inferior to other groups of *Leaves of Grass*, I am inclined to rank them with the very first, so bathed are they in that tender emotion, that divine attar of the soul, which, welling up from its depths, perfumes with immortality its most careless and otherwise transient words.

and generous heart there pours forth its secret. Set side by side with these glowing confessions, other writings on friendship seem frigid and calculating. The sentiment of "In Memoriam" is that of kid-gloved mourning. Emerson's friendship resides in the cerebral system, and not in the sympathetic. A delicate but frigid intellectuality keeps him at a distance from his friend. "Why insist on rash personal relations with your friend?" he says, "I do then with my friends as I do with my books. I would have them where I can find them, but I seldom use them."—"True love transcends the unworthy object, and dwells and broods on the eternal; and, when the poor interposed mask crumbles, it is not sad, but feels rid of so much earth, and feels its independency the surer." What an atrocious sentiment, that last! Compare the bowelless utterances on friendship of Emerson and Thoreau with Whitman's "Recorders, Ages hence," and his "Not Heat flames up and consumes," to get the sharp lines of contrast between the Bostonian and the Manhattanese characters.

Walt's symbol of manly affection—the sweet-flag, or calamus—belongs among the grasses, and like them suggests equality and brotherhood. It is found in vast masses in marshy ground, growing in fascicles of three, four, or five blades, which cling together for support, shoulder to shoulder and back to back, the delicate "pink-tinged" roots exhaling a faint fragrance, not only when freshly gathered, but after having been kept many years.

There is that in Walt Whitman's poems of friendship as well as in the profound emotional and sympathetic element of his other writings that irresistibly leads one to compare him with the Jesus of the Gospels. In the first place, the style is often like that of the New Testament (Whitman has been a great reader of the Bible, and this is doubtless due to "unconscious cerebration"). His matter bears the impress of artless originality.

Again, Jesus and Whitman are both of them poets, both prophets, both carpenters' sons, and both great democrats. But Jesus has the more spirituelle, violet nature, is pensively sad, introspective, austerely self-renunciatory; while Whitman is cheerful and objective, lusty, universal in his receptivities and affinities. Each teaches a large comrade-love, and illustrated it by self-sacrificing ministration to the suffering. From both streamed forth a personal magnetism, or effluence, that won the passionate devotion of the people, especially the lowly, not excluding even the poor Magdalenes. Both were rejected and despised by the haughty Pharisees of their time. Each loved and was loved by little children. Each faced the terror and mystery of life, looked with never-quailing gaze into the surrounding and underlying God-Reality, and pronounced its name to be Love, although Whitman's ideal of it gives it more power, makes it less ghostly, and vaster, more objective. Each trusted it with only occasional lapses into doubt.

Whitman's "Salut au Monde" is the joy-shout of a young and happy nation. As at a feast the symposiarch proposes names for toasts, so the poet of democracy raises high "the perpendicular hand," and calls by name to the brother-nations of the globe, offering them good will in America's name. And already the responses are beginning to appear;

> "For song issuing from its birthplace, after fulfilment, wandering,
> Reck'd or unreck'd, duly with love returns."

Nearly all the European magazine articles on Whitman treat of him as world-democrat, as Enrico Nencioni's papers in the *Nuova Antologia* (Rome) and M. Léo Quesnel's and Gabriel Sarrazin's in Paris journals.

> "You Hottentot with clicking palate! you woolly-hair'd hordes!
> You own'd persons dropping sweat-drops or blood-drops!
> You human forms with the fathomless ever-impressive countenances of brutes.
> . . . . . .

I do not prefer others so very much before you either,
I do not say one word against you, away back there where you stand,
(You will come forward in due time to my side)."

When we read lines like these from the "Salut," how our cheeks inly burn with shame at our own skim-milk Christian philanthropy! I like to read this poem, not more for its liberative influence on the mind—its oceanic breath, as of the trade winds, its spirit of divine compassion bathing all nations as impartially as the soft mists of the sea blown by the high impalpable winds around the globe—than for its fine single-line poems, its thumb-nail vignettes! Sections one and two of "Salut au Monde" are its prelude. They not only express in emblematic language the poet's unitary idealism, but hint, it seems to me, a democratic corollary of that to be the *raison d'être* of the poem. He speaks first as the Absolute, and second as an individual. As Absolute Being, as the All, the actual waves and climes and wheeling suns of the universe are within him; as individual, the images of these objects are within his brain. Now, if he is an integral part of the living organism, the world, is it not fitting he celebrate that entire world, and accept it all, with all its brotherhoods of men? If he deny them, will he not be denying himself?

In form the "Salut au Monde" is the longest-breath'd utterance in poetry, the protasis, or first half of the first period, extending over seven pages, and the apodosis, or conclusion, embraced in two or three lines at the end of section ten.

There is a fine bit of philosophical irony in the "Clouds" of Aristophanes. "Observe," says Strepsiades to his son,—

> "Observe how fine a thing is learning!
> There is no Jove, my son.
>
> *Phidippides*—Who is there then?
>
> *Strepsiades* (pointing to jar)—'Jar' is now king, and has dethroned old Jove."

It is as a protest against the jar, or dirt, philosophy that the robust spirituality of Walt Whitman is so welcome and opportune. Poetry, beaten back by Science from one stronghold to another, stripped of all her enchantments of illusion, her Valhallas and Paradisos, jinn, efreets, mountains of Kaf and caverns of Caucasus, elves, trolls, and kobolds, giants and dwarfs, and realms of faëry land forlorn ("vanish'd the turrets that Usk from its waters reflected, Arthur vanish'd with all his knights"), makes now her last and forever impregnable stand in the mystic border-land between the real and the ideal, the seen and the unseen. Poetry now and henceforth fuses with religion and assimilates science. As the young world now sweeps into the broader day of its manhood, there will come forth out of the depths of the Infinite Soul, as ever of old, prophets sublime and poet-seers to sing greater wonders than those that are past, and roam in thought from star to star to body forth the form of things unknown. Poetry is a strong ally of faith. Both have been the voice of the eternal-womanly: they are now to become the voice of the eternal-manly. Of a long line of coming poets of science and religion, Walt Whitman is the first in time. He is transcendental, hears through time the rippling of eternity's stream, sees diverging through space the highways of the soul, feels mysterious stirrings behind the tapestry of sense,—a fire within the fire, a blue within the sky, an emerald within the wave. His ethical philosophy shows the petty moralities and adjustments of our social life to be like the instincts of mites in the grander moral scheme of the universe. He does not affirm that the universe is unmoral, but that its ethical ends transcend ours, belong to a vaster scheme. In a word, Whitman's religious philosophy is Hegelian. According to Hegel, life is the self-development of the Absolute, and nature that through which it realizes itself,—its "objectivation." The universe is a living organism, and the seeming discords of time are

> "But stumbling steps of one persistent life
> That struggles up through mists to heights sublime."

Hegel's central principle is the reconciliation of opposites. For instance, every finite thing is itself and yet not itself; for, by the fact that it bears a relation to that which limits it, it contains within itself the principle of its own destruction. All antinomies are reconciled. The soul cannot be defeated by matter, for matter is but the objectivation of itself. Everything tends irresistibly toward the good. Evil is only evil to our vision. To the Absolute, pain and death are not discords and defeat, but essential and necessary steps in its eternal progress. To the good the evil clings as the shadow to the flying bird: evil dogs the steps of good as close as the night around the world the day. History is the progressive manifestation of reason, and all the different religious cults of men but fractional and imperfect expressions of one central and underlying truth.

Restricting our view to mankind, we see that in the view of Hegel and Whitman our bodies are but a portion of the objective side of God, its incarnate idea. And, as the Soul is indivisible, the portion of it that informs your body and mind is, in a sense, all of it. Out of the eyes of humanity God looks,—

> "Osiris spread abroad,
> Up-staring in all eyes."

The human psyche, or soul, is in organic connection with the Superconscious Substance itself,—the living soul-tissue continuous. This is the key to Whitman's mystical identification of himself with the Absolute.

> "O what are heroes, prophets, men,
> But pipes through which the breath of Pan doth blow
> A momentary music. . . .
> . . . Ebbs the tide, they lie
> White hollow shells upon the desert shore.

> But not the less the eternal wave rolls on
> To animate new millions, and exhale
> Races and planets, its enchanted foam."

In the macrocosm God rotates: in the interior of worlds It is quiescent, "sleeping"; and the rushing worlds, the blown gold-hair of comets, and the enormous bulks of the fiery galaxies (floating there, softly shimmering, diaphanous with spirituality) are but the phantasmagorial thought-projection of the Absolute Soul, of you and me.

In the following stanza from "Pioneers" soul, body, and underlying Will (or Absolute Being) are for the moment regarded as separate identities, and the "I" of the poet is identified with the Absolute:—

> "I, too, with my soul and body,
> We, a curious trio, picking, wandering on our way,
> Through these shores amid the shadows, with the apparitions pressing,
> Pioneers! O pioneers!"

So in that mystic inscription on a temple portal,—the lines prefixed to the latest editions of his works, "Come, said my soul,"—the same trio appears. *Anima loquitur*, but body is of equal rank; and the composite, "Walt Whitman," stands as the thought of God. Soul and Body together, being of identical substance (God-substance), form in the ocean of infinity a single idea, which is both absolute, in a sense, and also a unique thing or individuality.

Walt Whitman gets his word "identity" (occurring so often) from Schelling, whose *Identitätsphilosophie* teaches that there is one identical, indifferent, absolute substratum both for nature and spirit. Schelling complements Fichte's subjective idealism. With Schelling, nature, as well as thought, has reality-in-itself, independence; and it is on his idea that Whitman's doctrine of the body's co-ordinate worth with the spirit is based. By Whitman is German idealism for the first time applied in detail to the familiar things of the every-day world. In his vast

alembic, material nature is ever volatilized into the spiritual, dissolved in the menstruum of soul,—the great globe itself being a divine phantom, or eidólon, an efflorescence of the daimon-realm close beneath and around it.

There are two profound poems by Whitman which express his spiritual philosophy in such obscure and mystic phrase that I have been tempted to break my own rule and become an expounder of them. One of these poems is "Eidólons," the central thought of which is stated with less power, but no less clearly, in "Assurances," "Unnamed Lands," and § 13 of "Starting from Paumanok." Walt Whitman's eidólons are by no means the eidóla, or delusions, of Bacon; but he takes the idea of the old philosophers,—Epicurus, Empedocles, Democritus, Lucretius,—that all objects are continually giving off effluxes (ἀπορροίαι, eidóla) from their surfaces, by means of which our senses are able to take cognizance of the things themselves. Whitman, I say, takes this old idea merely as a symbol, and expresses by it a doctrine of universal immortality, that each part of the visible world, organic or inorganic, has its spiritual counterpart (eidólon) in the invisible world. Viewing the tangible, and seen as phenomenon, as the incarnated thought of the Sphere-Absolute, as an efflux of its nature, it is clear that all objects of the tangible would leave (as thought) permanent stamp upon their close underlying source, the divine thought-substance. They accordingly exist there everlastingly as "eidólons," or souls; and they are the only realities, the indestructible "entities of entities," the noumenal denominator of the phenomenal numerator. They exist as separate and yet one, and are as the drops of the sea to the sea's whole mass. It will be noticed that this theory includes, as the greater the less, Plato's tenet of the separate immortal existence of ideas.

It is interesting to know that this high mystical speculation of Whitman has received a certain amount of support from

scientific authorities. Long ago Dr. Thomas Young pointed out that there is no more difficulty in conceiving of a higher spiritual Power interfusing and sustaining the gross matter of which the worlds are composed than there is in conceiving of the forces of electricity and gravitation as pervading it.

But closer yet is the similarity of the idea of "Eidólons" to that propounded some years ago by Balfour Stewart and P. G. Tait in their curious book "The Unseen Universe." According to these thinkers, the world of immortality may lie in the interstellar spaces, where otherwise a stupendous amount of solar energy would be "wasted." When the visible universe as a whole shall vanish like a smoke-wreath in the infinite azure, it will pass into the interstellar spaces. So we can imagine that each object on the earth, organic or inorganic, animal or human, may make, by the processes of its growth and thought, a delicate living fac-simile register of itself in the sensitive ether immediately around and in it. This fac-simile, or register-counterpart, we can conceive of as immortal, and having its habitat in the void of space, or as freely pervading the (to us) grosser matter of worlds.

Thus, then, in the entrance poem to his work does the philosophical poet of the New World express his faith in immortality, and escalade the *flammantia mœnia mundi* in the attempt to bring down to man the spark of immortal fire: —

> "Angels and Gods, spirit and sense, thou takest
> In thy right hand as drops of dust or dew;
> The temples and the towers of Time thou breakest,
> His thoughts and words and works, to make them new."

The other mystical poem to which reference was made is the sea-chant, "As I ebbed with the Ocean of Life."* It was not

* In Whitman's sea-chants the opulence and sweeping range of his mind are impressively revealed. One thinks of the Muse of his poems of religion and the sea as of some Saturnian goddess wandering along the

until after many readings and after becoming thoroughly familiar with its author's philosophy that I was able to understand this poem, and resolve the intricate complexity of its spiritual presences. This seems to me now to be the meaning:—

First, there is the electric self, the body, born of the husky-voiced mother the ocean, and the father the earth. Over against it is the Soul, the entity of entities, the eidólon of nature, the mocking phantom, the Absolute, the "real Me," "the spirit that trails in the lines underfoot" of sand and liquid rims of sea, the Power that projects the apparitional idea, the earth. This phantom Soul hovers over the poet as he wends the visible ocean shore. *Its* real and special habitat is the *unknown* ocean, where the streams of life empty,† the shore dirged by the cries of the dying, and where the strong deliveress Death moves with soft feet, ushering souls into happiness. Further, out of this unknown sea of soul was born, of course, the *soul* of the poet.

Now, as the sands and windrows of the visible ocean shore lie in drifts at the feet of the Absolute Being, so, says the seer, do he and his words, washed up out of the soul-depths of the unknown ocean, lie in drifts at the feet of the Supreme,—

---

lonely ocean beach and feeding her soul with its boundless freedom, immensity, power, or as one of those Norse warrior spirits rising up out of his burial mound by the sea to be refreshed by the tossing billows and endless vistas. The only passage in literature to match that superb line, "as the sea to the whistle of Death pours its sweeping and unript waves," is afforded in Shakspere's "Pericles":—

> "The seaman's whistle
> Is as a whisper in the ears of Death,
> Unheard,"

which almost seems to have suggested Whitman's image.

† "Close, close to men,
Like undulating layer of air,
Right above their heads,
The potent plain of Dæmons spreads."—*Emerson.*

"You up there walking or sitting,
Whoever you are, we too lie in drifts at your feet."

Visible ocean and visible poet alike trace their rude aquarelles on the shore of time, unwitting of the end of it all or of their common source,—

"You oceans both, I close with you,
We murmur alike reproachfully rolling sands and drift, knowing not why."

These last lines show that the poet also regards the region of the infinite as the ocean of *death* (see also § 2 of the poem); and as such it is wrapped in mystery: it, too, knows not the reason of its existence. (Death and immortality are interchangeable and synonymous terms with Whitman in all his writings.)

Whitman's Hegelian spirituality has a powerfully materialistic or realistic side. The distinctive feature of his system will be thrown into stronger relief if we compare him with Emerson. Both are transcendental, and both hold to the identity of the spiritual and the material. Says Whitman,—

"Objects gross and the unseen soul are one."

Says Emerson: "The world is mind precipitated. "Man imprisoned, man crystallized, man vegetative, speaks to man impersonated." "Under all this running sea of circumstance, whose waters ebb and flow with perfect balance, lies the aboriginal abyss of real being. Essence, or God, is not a relation or a part, but the whole."

"He is the axis of the star;
He is the sparkle of the spar;
He is the heart of every creature."

Whitman's philosophy, as developed, is a more massive and trulier rounded whole than Emerson's. By the Platonic affinities of his elegant mind, Emerson, while recognizing theoretically that Nature is the universal Essence, is yet drawn con-

stantly toward its mental element, toward the positive pole, Spirit, in the dual substance Emerson dwells on the Over-Soul. Whitman does not forget the Under-Soul, and, while equally spiritual with Emerson, exalts the objective as Emerson does not: he is nearer to scientific truth in its breadth. The world is Whitman's presentation: he views it as apparition (this is ever the hovering thought in the background), and yet he never loses grasp of it as a *solid, real* apparition. He never loses himself in a Fichtean or Berkeleian egoism: he holds his idealism in reserve as a key-system. By Whitman religious philosophy is extricated from occult abstraction to bourgeon into the leaf and flower of common speech. By him philosophy is dragged out of the scholar's den, and tested for what it is worth, planted as a seed in the intellect, the conscience, the living act. But Emerson holds his Transcendentalism in a vague and dream-like way, and its only effect upon us is to make us irresolute and disinclined to act at all: he shrinks from applying to it the tests of practical life. But Whitman, as a European writer on him well says, transforms our formal and automatic views into living convictions, our science of the universe into a religion of the universe, permeating our whole being. Philosophy is not with Whitman, as with the recent development-scientists, the organization of all knowledge into an intellectual synthesis, the sublimation of positive inductive science; but it is chiefly an *à priori* system. He expressly states that the last word on eternal matters floats high and forever above all scientific explanation of the phenomenal world ("Specimen Days," p. 177). He belongs with the old seers and "exaltés," and with the German school, indeed is claimed for them. Says Rolleston, "Er ist der grösste poetische Vertreter von dem, was man gewönlich für ein Hauptmoment in der deutschen Philosophie hält" (Dresden address, 1883),—that is, its subjective or *à priori* feature.

Yet in what, after all, is such a system as Hegelianism

different from the hypothesis of the scientists (atoms and the interstellar ether, for example)? Is it not as scientific to form an hypothesis that will include and explain all the facts of life as to form one to explain the properties of matter, as Newton did? It is quite conceivable that Newton's gravitation law will have to be modified in certain particulars. And, as for the Hegelian explanation of the universe, Whitman is careful to say (and in saying it shows he possesses the true scientific spirit) that "the brain of the future may add to, revise, and even entirely reconstruct it," although "to-day it satisfies the mystery of the universe, to the human mind, with a more consoling scientific assurance than any yet" ("Specimen Days," p. 175).

Whitman's philosophy of the beyond is a faith rather than a dogma. Whatever may happen to us, I have heard him say, it will be for the best; and he would echo Marcus Antoninus's noble idea that whatever is good for the whole of nature is good for a part. Whitman has his despondent moments. One of these is pathetically described in "Elemental Drifts":—

"O baffled, balk'd!
Aware now that . . . I have not once had the least idea who or what I am.
I perceive I have not really understood anything—not a single object—and that no man ever can."

Compare the wail of Faust (Act I., Scene 1):—

"Den Göttern gleich' ich nicht! Zu tief ist es gefühlt;
Dem Wurme gleich' ich, der den Staub durchwühlt,
Den, wie er sich im Staube nährend lebt,
Des Wandrer's Tritt vernichtet und begräbt."

Viewed in its relative or social aspects, there is something startling in Whitman's amphisbænic, ambidexter theory of life. In his tremendous pantheism the Trinity becomes a Quaternity, and includes Satan,—the shadow and reverse of God the obverse. See "Chanting the Square Deific," p. 339 of *Leaves of*

*Grass.** In a large sense Whitman is an optimist,—not in the sense of denying the existence of evil. His is not the weak optimism of Emerson's early essays, but that of one who believes in the melioration of things, while admitting evil, *as relative*, to be colossal and menacing. It is conceivable that from the absolute point of view there *is* no such thing as imperfection. There is no such thing as a lie, for instance, says Walt Whitman, for nothing fails of its perfect return. Nature always rejects and revenges a lie, so that there is complete retribution and normal readjustment.

* "In the ecclesiastical conception of Deity there is a fourth person in the Godhead,—namely, the Devil,—an outlying member, unacknowledged indeed, the complex of all evil, but as much a part of the Deity as the Son or the Holy Ghost, and far more powerful than all the rest, who seem but jackals to provide for this 'roaring lion.'" (From Theodore Parker's farewell letter to his church in Boston, written from Italy, where he had gone to die.")

PART III.

THE STYLE OF LEAVES OF GRASS.

THE curves, the sheen, the snow-curls of the waves are no more delicately symptomatic of the unrest of the sea than the state of the ideal arts, in any epoch of change, is symptomatic of the turmoil of the mind of the age. Breathe upon the delicate volutes and arabesques of a frost-fern, and it is gone; jostle the green crape of a cedar-tree, and its fairy robe of frosty diamonds slips away; ply the axe of science against the dying trunk of any given philosophy of nature, and the petals of poetry are the first to fall. As the rich fretwork of green and black moss etched on the enswathing corselet of the old birch is its warrant of certain death, so is the over-formal spirit of current poetry—its *lâcheté, mollesse*—the sure token of its coming decease. Indeed, even in Sir Philip Sidney's time he could write that "poetry, from almost the highest estimation of learning, is fallen to be the laughing-stock of children." Yet I believe that we are on the threshold of a grander poetical era. The Genius of Beauty is not dead, but is only preparing for a new avatar. The endless empty ridicule that has been expended upon Walt Whitman's original and well premeditated poetical style—I refer to the style of the noblest rhythmic chants —makes it imperative that before considering his own special work we should attempt to ascertain the ground-principles of all poetic art.

A national style in poetry is as tenacious as a national religion, and it seems to be considered almost as sacrilegious to depreciate the one as the other. Yet the time has come when the poets, if they would retain the entire respect of virile thinkers, must strengthen and engrandize their art by certain important technical reforms; for the weightier thought and

deeper emotional life of the age, with the refining of the musical sense, have combined to render the old moulds of poetry quite inadequate for the expression of the grander kinds of poetic thought. Poesy has outgrown her time-honoured singing-robes. The old "heroics" are heroic no longer: the little pentameter cracks under the weight of the nebular hypothesis, and even the Greek hexameter would not bear the burden of Hegel's thought. Imagine Von Hartmann cramping his "Philosophy of the Unconscious" with the metres of Lucretius, or Herbert Spencer casting his "Sociology" in the measures of the "Essay on Man"! Is it hazarding too much to say that henceforth the *greatest* poetry can never be cramped by petty lines of monotonous length and by seesaw rhymes? A new universe, new poets; complexity of thought, complexity in the forms of thought; weightier ideas, weightier sentences and verse. The word-carpenters ("the rhymesters, melancholy and swallow-tailed," as Whitman once called them, the "pale poetlings lisping cadenzas piano" and "tintinnabulating minuets") seem to have had their day. We quarrel with mechanically measured verse, because it lacks freedom, range, complex harmony. Our unimpassioned non-lyrical verse has as unnatural and staccato a movement as the vocal exercises of a country singing-school. It is to be lamented that convention compelled artists like Longfellow and Browning and Whittier to set the poetical palette with such scanty pigments, breathing the soul through the embouchures of so barbarous an instrument, so heavily handicapped by the old greaves and cuisses of rhyme and metre. How the poets must envy the mocking-bird and the meadow-lark! But there is no good reason why they should not imitate their freedom. When the red fire-dust of sunset bursts through the clouds in exactly parallel rectangular bars; when the thunder-crash, the swirl, the rush, the rainbow-mist of the torrent remind me only of a machine shop; when leaves grow in rows on the trees, and the trees themselves stand with the night-

mare regularity of city houses; when the stars of heaven are ranged in the sky in the form of gridirons and clapboards; when the delirious song of the brown thrush reminds me of a country choir; and when the arbutus emits its haunting dryad-breath in metrical puffs and wafts,—then only shall I be convinced that poetry confined in the strait-jacket of fixed metres and rhymes is fulfilling the highest law of its being, and has reached the acme of the possible in respect of its investiture. I do not mean that poetry, any more than painting, should slavishly imitate nature: the poet, like the pictorial artist, will by selective volition often form an ideal composition which shall have the power of giving an æsthetic pleasure greater than bald realism would afford. Yet in any particular portion of his work he shall not travesty or infringe any law of nature; and the nearer in general harmony, as well as detail of finish, the composition comes to nature, the stronger it will be as a work of art.

Now, it is a truism that Nature, in all her forms, avoids base mechanical regularity. The jagged line of the forest against the sky, the leaves of trees,—no two alike, and no two sides of the same alike,—the tendrils of climbing vines, the sinuosities of crystals, the colour-spots of flowers and of animals,—in everything you have a-symmetry, aberrancy. The eyes and mouth corners of an idiot alone are exactly alike, said William M. Hunt in his art-talks. So it is known that the right ear is invariably higher than the left. The atoms of water may "march in tune," but the tunes are anything but those of a hymn-book: only provide a smooth surface, as of a window-pane, and see what wild, defiant freedom you will have. Even the border lines of the most symmetrical of trees, the cedar, are full of jagged recesses and irregular chiaro-oscuro; and yet the whole tree is of exquisite grace and loveliness, even to the tiptop spray. The beautiful disorder of a tree arises from the necessities of its life, its stretching out after the indispensable

sunlight and air. And the variformity which a genuine poem shows results from the circumstance that you cannot mould ideas with the regularity of Bologna sausages, or cut up sentences with a hand-saw and not murder them. Nothing that is the work of the spirit of *life* has perfect symmetry. Purely bi-lateral objects are all man-made. To imagine that poetry—the effluence of the free creative spirit of man—can be mechanically cut and measured to order is to make the mistake of the Laputan tailors in "Gulliver," who, in taking an order for a suit of clothes, got the altitude of a customer by the quadrant, using the rule and compass and mathematical calculations for determining the other measurements, the result being that the clothes were often a most wretched fit, owing to the mistake of a figure in the ciphering! Ruskin tells us that the tower of Pisa is the only ugly tower in Italy, because its tiers are all equal, or nearly so, in height. He says that the variations of the old architects are not mere blunders, nor carelessness, but the result of a fixed scorn, if not dislike, of accuracy in measurements; and, in most cases, of a determined resolution to work out an effective symmetry by variations as subtle as those of nature. A mark of good Gothic, as he tells us, is its irregularity. "If one part always answers accurately to another part, it is sure to be a bad building; and the greater and more conspicuous the irregularities, the greater the chances are that it is a good one."

Even the discord has its place in poetry, as it has in music, says Schopenhauer ("Metaphysics of Music," III. 39): "In general, music consists of a constant succession of more or less disquieting chords,—*i.e.*, chords which excite longing,—and more or less quieting and satisfying chords; just as the life of the heart (the will) is a constant succession of greater or less disquietude through desire and aversion, and just as various degrees of relief. Accordingly, the harmonious sequence of chords consists of the correct alternation of dissonance and con-

sonance. A succession of merely consonant chords would be satiating, wearisome, and empty, like the languor produced by the satisfaction of all wishes. Therefore, dissonances must be introduced, although they disquiet us and affect us almost painfully."

One may confidently open at random the volumes of the poets in search of exemplifications of the laws of poetic art; for, *with a few notable exceptions* (poems and poets), they contain little that is not illustrative of what great art should *not* be, in the matter of technique. One of the exceptional poems is Wordsworth's ballad, "We are Seven." Every line but two of this ballad contains an unmutilated thought, and the thought in nearly every case ends with the line, as in this stanza:—

I met a little cottage girl:
She was eight years old, she said;
Her hair was thick with many a curl
That clustered round her head.

But the third line of the following stanza is all wrong:—

Two of us in the church-yard lie,
My sister and my brother;
And, in the church-yard cottage, I
Dwell near them with my mother.

There is no logical break in the thought after "I," and there should have been none indicated by the lines. Let us try it in this way:—

Two of us in the church-yard lie, my sister and my brother;
And, in the church-yard cottage, I dwell near them with my mother.

This is evidently more endurable. Take an illustration from Keats:—

O thou, whose mighty palace roof doth hang
From jagged trunks, and overshadoweth
Eternal whispers, glooms, the birth, life, death
Of unseen flowers in heavy peacefulness!

Now, the logical division of the thought here is as follows: —

O thou, whose mighty palace roof doth hang from jagged trunks,
And overshadoweth eternal whispers, glooms,
The birth, life, death of unseen flowers in heavy peacefulness!

Why, then, should not the lines be so printed, and cease to outrage the logic of the thought and injure one's enjoyment of the poetry?

It is a law almost without exception that in impassioned verse the thought and the line end together. But Shelley's "Skylark" affords an instance of intense thought often injured by chip-chop division into short lines, as in this stanza: —

Keen as are the arrows
Of that silver sphere,
Whose intense lamp narrows
In the white dawn clear,
Until we hardly see, we feel, that it is there.

The heaviness and roughness of Browning's jolting metres are partly due to the unnatural line division. The more scholarly and extended productions of Tennyson have the same peculiarity, although his more popular lyrics—"Claribel," "Locksley Hall," "St. Agnes," "Charge of the Light Brigade," "The May Queen"—have a crystal clearness and ring derived from their intensity of feeling, and the consequent brevity of the thoughts and lines (which almost all end together). Byron's "Destruction of Sennacherib" is technically a perfect poem, because every line is a separate and rounded poem in itself: —

The Assyrian came down like a wolf on the fold,
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;
And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea,
When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.

The following stanza, selected at random from "Childe Harold," is a piece of pure prose masquerading in the stolen singing-robes of poetry: —

Of sackcloth was thy wedding garment made;
Thy bridal's fruit is ashes; in the dust
The fair-haired Daughter of the Isles is laid,
The love of millions! How did we *intrust*
Futurity to her! and, though it *must*
Darken above our bones, yet fondly *deem'd*
Our children should obey her child, and *bless'd*
Her and her hoped-for seed, whose promise *seem'd*
Like stars to shepherds' eyes:—'t was but a meteor beam'd.

How easily might all this execrable chow-chow have been logically arranged in lines of rhythmic prose, not a particle more irregular in length than nature would have justified or the keenest musical sense have approved! It is in sarcastic parody of such verse of Byron's as this that Mr. Swinburne has written the following lines of doggerel commentary:—

Now this, we feel, is the sort of thing
That is easy for any boy to bring
Up to any extent who has once
Read Coleridge or Scott, and is not quite a dunce.
. . . . .
I must observe, moreover, that it was
As
Extravagant a piece of criticism
To
Compare—as some critics do—
Such verse as Byron's (bristling
With every sort and kind of barbarism
And solecism,
Not to speak of the tune,
Which suggests the love-strains of a baboon)
With any verse by Shelley,
As to compare a jaded waggoner's whistling
To á lark's tune, or á star tó a jelly-fish.
. . . . .
The metre here is Byron's, every line:
For God's sake, reader, take it not for mine!

Mr. Swinburne's burlesque reminds one of Coventry Patmore's productions: for instance, the following from the

"Unknown Eros," in which the height of the ridiculous in the matter of serious poetical technique is reached :—

> For, ah! who can express
> How full of bonds and simpleness
> Is God, how narrow is He,
> And how the wide waste field of possibility
> Is only trod
> Straight to his homestead in the human heart?

Taking up for examination the majestic dramas of Shakspere, you discover the significant fact that the diction of his maturer years was attained by gradual increments of prose, and gradual abandonment of rhymes and fixed metres. "Hamlet," "Lear," "Othello," "The Tempest," "Julius Cæsar," are to such early plays as "The Two Gentlemen of Verona" and "Love's Labour's Lost" what the cathedral of Rouen is to an American backwoods church; and the splendour both of the great poems and the great cathedral is conditioned upon their irregular freedom of structure. By almost wholly eschewing rhymes and end-stopped lines and adopting run-on lines, double endings, Alexandrines, and broken lines,—and, above all, by freer use of the melodious rhythms of common speech with its abrupt transitions and rests,—Shakspere gave the greatest strength and spontaneity to his diction. So that, to use another simile, one may say that his earlier creations bear to the later the same relation that the stiff, archaic draperies of the Ægina marbles bear to the woven wind that wraps the limbs of the figures of the Parthenon and of the Temple of Victory in Athens. In "Love's Labour's Lost"—his earliest play—there are a thousand lines of rhymed dialogue: in "Winter's Tale"—one of his latest—there are none. By a little figuring among Mr. Fleay's statistical tables, as given in the *Transactions of the New Shakspere Society* for 1874, I find that fully one-third of the lines in "Love's Labour's Lost" and one-third of those in "Midsummer-Nights' Dream" are rhymed; while of "Lear" only one forty-fourth, and of "Hamlet" one forty-eighth, of the lines are

rhymed. Furthermore, out of the 3924 lines of "Hamlet," 1208 are prose, and 2490 are in blank verse which can be distinguished from Shakspere's stately prose by little except its appearance to the eye. The dialogues of the play are mostly in prose, and the speeches and soliloquies in heroics. I think it possible that, had Shakspere lived, he would have composed serious dramas almost entirely in prose. At any rate, we have in prose form the comedy, "Merry Wives of Windsor," and the tragi-comedy, "Much Ado about Nothing"; and we know from internal evidence that he felt more and more hampered by metre as his experience of life and authorship grew deeper and richer. Good speech is song,—a succession of rhythms, tunes, and cadences, played on a wondrous instrument; and written speech may be just as musical. "Good prose," says Landor, "to say nothing of the original thought it conveys, may be infinitely varied in modulation. It is only an extension of metres, an amplification of harmonies, of which even the best and most varied poetry admits but few." And says Victor Hugo: "Verse alone is not poetry. Verse is only an elegant dress upon a beautiful body. Poesy can be expressed in prose." I remember in Symonds's "Sketches and Studies in Southern Europe" long strains of almost faultless iambic music; and such may be found in every one of Ruskin's books. One dislikes to depreciate the English heroic line, which, like the cross-bow of England's sturdy yeomen, has done such faithful service in her honour; but the truth is, that its short length is a fatal defect. The world has grown longer breath'd and greater thoughted, and asks, for the expression of its deeper epic and dramatic emotion, a line longer, weightier, more plastic, and admitting more of picturesque irregularity. You may take one of the finest specimens of blank verse in the language—the "Morte d'Arthur" of Tennyson,—and, comparing it with the prose of Mallory, you will find the heroics, as such, tedious and obstructive of the free flow of the poetic thought. If the long, prosaic

interludes of "Paradise Lost" were cast in actual prose form, it would be found that a magical change had been wrought in the whole work. I will go further, and venture the assertion that, to our eye and ear, fully two-thirds of Shakspere's blank verse—all, namely, except that inspired by the strongest emotion, such as the speeches of Hamlet to the Ghost—would be more acceptable if run smoothly on in the prose form, instead of being hacked up into lines. Anybody can test this by reading aloud the less emotional lines of "Hamlet," and the prose of the same play. In our modern-life plays the stiff antiqueness of heroic verse is unendurable. We ask that our dramatic works be written and spoken in the sparkling speech of every-day life. The blank verse dramas of the Victorian poets have all fallen still-born.

Browning, who made some notable departures in rhythms and metres from the stock poetry, often gets tired of his blank verse, and (as in "Pippa Passes" and "The Blot in the 'Scutcheon") keeps breaking away into prose, and even his heroics could not be distinguished from his prose if all were run on alike in prose form. Mr. Longfellow's "Journals," published since his death, show that he had a great partiality for the hexameter, adopting it for one of the most charming of his works, "Evangeline." Now, the hexameter is a verse on the border-line between prose and poetry. And, wearisome as its monotony becomes, it is easy to show its superiority to the pentameter for the expression of untrammelled thought, and to see that it owes this advantage to its greater length. Mr. Longfellow cites Lord Derby's translation of the last line of the "Iliad,"—

"Such were the rites to glorious Hector paid,"—

remarking that its short length compels the omission of the one characteristic Homeric epithet, which, however, is easily included in the hexameter,—

"Such were the funeral rites of Hector, the Tamer of Horses."

For all the reasons that have been adduced, then, I believe that poetry is narrowing to its legitimate field, the lyrical; and that less impassioned thought, including the bulk of dramatic compositions, should seek, as a medium of expression, the balanced harmonies and complex rhythms of poetic prose. The rhyme and clang-tints of impassioned lyrics will not become obsolete so long as the human soul has melody in its depths.* And let some of these lyrics be strictly symmetrical, if desirable and possible (shells and flowers and animal bodies have approximate symmetry): only let the thought never be unnaturally divided. For poetry, from the very nature of ideas and sentences, is not a sculpturesque or an architectural art, but it is a pictorial and a musical art. And all professional idea carvers—shapers of ballades, villanelles, rondels, rondeaux, acrostics, sonnets, pantoums, sestinas, and chants-royals—are not poets, but elegant versifiers: their art is not that of Turner or Chopin, but of the ivory cutter.

Now, as, by the hypothesis, poetry is affined to the graphic arts, their laws must so far as possible be also its laws. But the story of the development of the graphic arts is but the record of progress from hard outline to soft mystery, simplicity to complexity, conventional limitations to unfettered freedom. Hence what the stereotyped sculpture of Egypt is to the perfect work of Periclean Athens, the severe outline painting of Raphael and the pre-Raphaelites to the softened transitional tones of modern landscapes in oil, or the hard mechanical lines of Holbein and Bewick to the defiant freedom of a Rembrandtesque etching or the tonic richness of an American wood-cut,—such

* Says Emerson in the work on him by his son, p. 229 :—

"There is such a thing as strong and perfect rhyme-work,—grand Pindaric strokes as firm as the tread of a horse; rhyme that vindicates itself as an art, the stroke of the bell of a cathedral; rhyme which knocks at prose and dulness with the stroke of a cannon-ball."

is the archaic technique of the old metrical masters to the style of the nobler poetry of the present and the future.

It has been well said that a good style is like a suit of the finest chain armour, so strong that the thought can go into battle with it, but so flexible that it can hold the pencil in its steel fingers for the most delicate painting. But will any one maintain that our current metrical manacles constitute such a style? "What we once admired as poetry," says Emerson, "has long since come to be a sound of tin pans; and many of our later books we have outgrown. Perhaps Homer and Milton will be tin pans yet. . . . Poems—we have no poem. Whenever that angel shall be organized and appear on earth, the Iliad will be reckoned a poor ballad-grinding." "It is not metres, but a metre-making argument," he says in another place, "that makes a poem,—a thought so passionate and alive that, like the spirit of a plant or an animal, it has an architecture of its own, and adorns nature with a new thing."

Says Whitman, "Perfect poems bud from metrical laws as unerringly and loosely as lilacs and roses on a bush, and shed the perfume impalpable to form."

"One may be ashamed," says Pope, "to consume half one's days in bringing sense and rhyme together." "Rhyme," says Milton," is the invention of a barbarous age to set off wretched matter and lame meter."

Schopenhauer, in a chapter on the "Æsthetics of Poetry," in *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, has some good things on the subject of rhyme. He speaks of the humiliating twists and subterfuges to which a poet is obliged to resort in order to get his rhymes. He says that rhythm is intuitive, has its origin in the deeps of the soul, in *pure sensibility;* while rhyme is "a mere matter of sensation in the organ of hearing, and belongs only to *empirical sensibility.* Hence rhythm is a far nobler and worthier aid than rhyme." The ancients disdained rhyme. It took its rise in the barbarism of the Middle Ages. "The

poverty of French poetry rests chiefly upon the fact that being without metre it is restricted to rhyme." But Schopenhauer acknowledges the charm of rhyme, as wielded by a master; and who does not? But firm and masterly must be the touch and refined the ear that can henceforth interpleach rhyme with rhyme and assonance with assonance in a way that shall not offend our music-cultured ears and science-greatened minds. There are few living masters of the shell who are equal to the task, and their skill waxes subtler every year. There are carols, madrigals, and glees which, like a kiss or a rose or a powerful volatile essence, can be enjoyed but for a moment; or, again, are like rockets breaking in soft color-spray against the blue of night; yet there are other strains with such involution of harmony and thought that we cannot say they take their laws from external nature, but rather from the music of the soul. There are poems by Tennyson ("Eleanore" and "Lilian," *e.g.*), Poe, and Swinburne which, in their technique, not contravene, but surpass the morphological and musical powers of nature. The best melody of nature is poor and simple to the harmonies of Wagner and Beethoven. In the following portion of a rondel by Swinburne—call it a symphony in "s" and "r"—on the death of Richard Wagner there is an orchestral music of which there is no trace in Shakspere or Milton, much less in nature:—

Mourning on earth, as when dark hours descend,
Wide-winged with plagues, from heaven; when hope and mirth
Wane, and no lips rebuke or reprehend
Mourning on earth.

The soul wherein her songs of death and birth,
Darkness and light, were wont to sound and blend,
Now silent, leaves the whole world less in worth;
Winds that make moan and triumph, skies that bend,

Thunders and sounds of tides in gulf or firth,
Spake through his spirit of speech, whose death should send
Mourning on earth.

Yet even here the old vice of artificial line division injures the music.

After this preliminary survey I come at length to Whitman, who is one of the few writers in the world besides Swinburne able to compose symphonic word-music. It can be indubitably proved that his poetic art, *as shown in his most finished productions*, the rhythmic chants,—and especially in his later poems,—is profoundly consonant with the laws of nature and symphonic music; and that conversely and necessarily, therefore, the whole body of English poetry, with the exception of a few lyrical masterpieces, is composed (technically or metrically considered) upon a system as false to nature as it is to the higher harmonies of music.

The great gain in casting nobler and longer works in non-rhyming form is release from the degrading task of sentence-sawing and twisting, and the fixing of the attention on the message to be spoken. Nor is this offering the least encouragement to idleness or inferior work. It is precisely the most difficult thing in the world for a poet or painter to imitate nature's spontaneity. In the first place, his songs must be the pulsations of a profoundly musical nature; and second, while allowing the hand of the Unconscious to wander over the darkling strings of his soul, he must yet know how to so subtly mingle himself in the creative process as, by the higher instinct of his culture, to guide all to a supreme musical expression and shaping which shall surpass the careless work of the pseudo-naturalist in the exact measure of the deeper thought and wider intellectual range they represent. This psychical performance is the pinnacle of the soul's art-life, the farthest point reached by the fountain in its sunward leap. Here the circle of intellectual growth returns to its starting point, and the mind of man comes into electric and vital contact with the Soul of Nature, partaking by hidden inlet of her high powers and virtues.

Let it be premised that to the creations of the seer-poets technique adds very little value. The supreme art of these poets is to forget all art, to have a high moral or emotional aim, and noble passion, and let the style flow spontaneously out of these. Indeed, if the whole mind of *any* poet is directed chiefly to artistic form, he will never attain supreme artistic form. Plato has said, "Art is the expression of the highest moral energy." Poetry is not a thing of yard-sticks and tinkling brasses, but is "the measure of the intensity of the human soul." Where the air is densest, as on the plains, there the roll of the thunder and the splendor of the lightning are most sublime. The greater number of current poems are to the mind what cork is to water: they have form, but no weight, and refuse to sink into the memory; they are like brooks without water. "Genius is nothing but love," said W. M. Hunt: "whatever the artist paints must be from the heart's blood, if it is only two marks on a shingle." But poetry to-day has become partly a matter of trick, as it was with Simmias of Rhodes, who wrote verses in the shape of an altar, an egg, a double-edged axe, etc. About the only emotion excited in our breasts by this all-prevalent brand of poetry is that which we feel in looking at the contortions of a circus gymnast. No matter about the thought, but only see how the juggler keeps those nine rhymes going in the air at once! How deftly he managed that difficult line! (and twisted the neck of his thought in doing it). The painful interest we feel in a milliner with her mouth full of pins (as in Maria Edgeworth's "Mademoiselle Panache"), that is how the average sonneteer affects us. I repeat, the style of the poem will flow spontaneously and in original forms from noble aim and passion. And never doubt that there are as many ways of expressing poetic thought as there are original souls. "Never was a song good or beautiful which resembled any other," said Pierre d'Auvergne. We should always expect from a great artist a new style,

one that must win its way into favor through abuse, as in the case of Turner, Victor Hugo, Shakspere. "The melange of existence is but an eternal font of type, and may be set up to any text, however different—with room and welcome, at whatever time, for new compositors."

It is passing strange how incapable otherwise intelligent persons are of true critical judgments. The A, B, C, of criticism is to put yourself in an author's place, judge him by what he proposed to attain. Now, Walt Whitman, from the very start, gave notice in the preface to his first volume that, in his opinion, the time had come to "break down the barriers of form between prose and poetry" ("Specimen Days," pp. 266 and 322); and he proceeded to illustrate his theory in poems—when, lo! a chorus of jeering voices exclaiming, "These 'poems' are half prose: do you call such and such lines poetry?"* No, my bat-eyed ones, we do not: did we not distinctly premise the contrary,—that the work was to be partly in prose? Now, as to the poetical portions of *Leaves of Grass*, let us see if they meet the tests of true art. Beyond question there are certain fundamentals which will never be found lacking in pure poetry. One of these is *Music*, and another is *Form*.

There is music and music,—the simple ballad of the harper and the intricate symphony of the modern composer. Whitman, as has often been said, is the Wagner of poets. As

* "I suppose the chief bar to the action of the imagination, and stop to all greatness in this present age of ours, is its mean and shallow love of jest; so that if there be in any good and lofty work a flaw, failing, or undipped vulnerable part, where sarcasm may stick or stay, it is caught at, and pointed at, and buzzed about, and fixed upon, and stung into as a recent wound is by flies; and nothing is ever taken seriously or as it was meant, but always, if it may be, turned the wrong way, and misunderstood; and, while this is so, there is not, nor cannot be, any hope of achievement of high things. Men dare not open their hearts, if we are to broil them on a thorn-fire."—*John Ruskin.*

Wagner abandoned the cadences of the old sonatas and symphonies,—occurring at the end of every four, eight, or sixteen bars,—so Whitman has abandoned the measured beat of the old rhymed see-saw poetry, after having himself thoroughly tried it, as the early poems appended to his prose volume attest. In the old operas you were always let down every few seconds by the regularly recurrent cadences: in the dramas of Wagner you never touch ground, but soar, like an eagle or a planet, in great, spiral, Geryon-flights of harmony. So with Whitman poetry has now become an instrument breathing a music in so vast a key that even the stately wheelings and solemn pomp of Milton's verse seem rather formal and mechanical. Whitman's dithyrambic chants, with their long, winding fiords of sound, require—like summer thunder or organ music—perspective of the ear, if the phrase will be allowed: they must be considered in vocal mass, and not in parts; and, when so considered, it will be found that nearly every page is held in solution by a deep-running undertone of majestic rhythm.* "Harmony latent," said Heracleitus, "is of more value than that which is patent." In the matter of orchestral word-music, Whitman, in his rhythmic chants, does at any rate more than any other mortal has yet accomplished. Only consider how inferior, for the expression of deep emotion, the cold, solitary, inarticulate words of ink and paper are to music:—

> "The swift contending fugue,—the wild escape
> Of passions,—long-drawn wail and sudden blast,

* For the benefit of people who have no musical ear I will adduce the testimony of Mrs. Fanny Raymond Ritter, wife of the Professor of Music at Vassar College, who speaks of the strong rhythmical pulsing musical power of *Leaves of Grass* (Bucke, p. 157), and also that of one who belongs to the native home of music—Signor Enrico Nencioni of Italy, who in an article published in the *Nuova Antologia* magazine of Rome, August, 1885, affirms with emphasis the existence of a "grandiosa e musicale struttura" in Whitman's poetry.

> The low sad mutterings and entangled dreams
> Of viols and basoons, . . .
> . . . . . .
> "The trumpet-cries of anger and despair,
> The mournful marches of the muffled drum;
> The bird-like flute-notes leaping into air";—

how will you imprison the vague-sweet and mysterious suggestions of the voices of these children of sound in lifeless, breathless words?

I do not affirm that every part of Whitman's work is musical. There are prosaic intervals in all poetry—in Tennyson's, Shakspere's, and Browning's as much as in any,—only with them the prose is masked in the *form* of poesy, without possessing its lyric soul. But what I do affirm is that the proportion of poetry to prose in *Leaves of Grass* is no less than in any other poet's work, and that the proportion of *symphonic* music—rude at times, if you choose—is immensely greater than in the compositions of any other bard. I cannot quote to illustrate, because I should have to quote whole poems. Read the Sea Chants, Drum Taps, "Italian Music in Dakota," "Proud Music of the Storm," "That Music always around Me," "Vigil Strange," "The Singer in the Prison," "Pioneers, O Pioneers," and the "Burial Hymn of Lincoln," and you will catch the interior music I speak of. It will be different from what you expected: it will not remind you of a church choir; but it is there, nevertheless.

"In the rhythm of certain poets," says Emerson, "there is no manufacture, but a vortex or musical tornado, which falling on words and the experience of a learned mind whirl these materials into the same grand order as planets or moons obey, and seasons and monsoons." That is the kind of rhythm you will find in the best of Whitman's chants. For twenty years Whitman absorbed the strains of the best singers of the world in the New York operas, and many of his lines were written

down while hearing the music, or immediately after (Bucke, p. 157),—a fact that gives us the key to many a bit of wonderful melody that sparkles out of his interspaces of prose. The little poem, "Weave in, my Hardy Life," when analysed and divided as the ordinary poets would divide it, turns out to be made up of regular four-foot iambic lines, with two three-foot iambics and one or two lines long or short by a foot,—licenses which every poet takes. I add the poem entire, with the lines cut up in the ordinary unnatural way. But first let us have the three opening lines as they stand on the poet's page :—

"Weave in, weave in, my hardy life,
Weave yet a soldier strong and full for great campaigns to come,
Weave in red blood, weave sinews in like ropes, the senses, sight weave in."

The ordinary method would be as follows. (At the close of each of Whitman's lines I place a perpendicular bar) :—

"Weave in, weave in, my hardy life, |
Weave yet a soldier strong and full
For great campaigns to come, |
Weave in red blood, weave sinews in
Like ropes, the senses, sight weave in, |
Weave lasting sure, weave day and night
The weft, the warp, incessant weave, tire not, |
(We know not what the use O life,
Nor know the aim, the end,
Nor really aught we know, |
But know the work, the need goes on
And shall go on, the death-envelop'd march
Of peace as well as war goes on,) |
For great campaigns of peace the same
The wiry threads to weave, | we know not why
Or what, yet weave, forever weave." |

Now, one may venture to say that, if these musical lines had been written in the above orthodox way, not a critic would have peeped. But the awful heresy of originality! The daring to be natural! Nor is this poem a solitary exception.

If the reader will turn to pages 366 and 368 of *Leaves of Grass*, and read the poems "By Broad Potomac's Shore," "From Far Dakota's Cañons," "What Best I see in Thee," and "Spirit that formed this Scene," he will discover that the iambic movement in these is almost perfect, containing only such variations as nature approves and as the most cultivated musical sense indorses. And these instances might be multiplied many times, especially from the more recent poems,—as "Of that Blithe Throat of Thine," published in *Harper's Monthly*, Jan., 1885; "If I should need to name, O Western World" (Philadelphia *Press*, 1884); and "Red Jacket from Aloft" (1884). "To a Man-of-War-Bird" is a poem almost purely iambic in form: so are "Ethiopia saluting the Colors," "World, take Good Notice," "Delicate Cluster," "Joy, Shipmate, Joy." There is plenty of music in Whitman's poems, if you only have the ear to detect it, and are not fooled by the visible form, or mould, the poet has chosen.

As to form, poetry may legitimately be divided into two groups or styles,—the sculpturesque and the pictorial. Hitherto the poets have only attempted to create in the sculpturesque, or Greek, style. All Greek art is based on the principle of form, summed up in the saying of Plato, "Beauty is proportion," and in the dictum of a modern Greek (the poet Goethe), "Die Kunst ist nur Gestaltung," "Art is form alone." But Walt Whitman exfoliates the art of poetry into a wider air and range. He would make it less artificial, give it more of the grandeur of nature. "Poetic style," he says, "when address'd to the soul, is less definite form, outline, sculpture, and becomes vista, music, half-tints, and even less than half-tints. True, it may be architecture; but again it may be the forest wild-wood, or the best effect thereof, at twilight, the waving oaks and cedars in the wind, and the impalpable odor."

If you see nothing to like in Walt Whitman's lines, you will see nothing to please you in the long leaves of coloured lights

that rock in sumptuous idleness on the waves, nothing in the purple-floating richness of the flower-de-luce, nothing in the exquisite clare-obscure, soft craterous glooms, and rolling dream-drapery emergent from the locomotive's funnel, nothing in the bobolincoln's pretty little orchestra,—gurgle, whistle, trill, and steady undertone of chime,—nothing in the great bell's resonant roar and long, tapering after-hum; for in all these forms and sounds there is the vague irregularity and asymmetry of all natural phenomena.

But to come closer to the details of our poet's art in this matter of form. As I have said, the fatal defect of the ten-syllable, or heroic, line is that it is too short. To fit your delicate fancy with blank verse, you have got to mangle its joints. But Whitman never breaks a verse on the wheel. So far as I can discover, about the average number of syllables required to express a single poetical thought is from sixteen or twenty to twenty-five.* I at least affirm that about one half of all simple poetical thoughts require that much articulated breath to get them uttered. Every one of Whitman's lucid Greek pages illustrates the statement. His work is nearly always blocked out into lines or periods the length of which corresponds with the natural length of the thoughts. As, for example, in these lines:—

O Western orb sailing the heaven,
Now I know what you must have meant as a month since I walk'd,
As I walk'd in silence the transparent shadowy night,
As I saw you had something to tell as you bent to me night after night,

* The opening lines of the Sapphic "Hymn to the Aphrodite" show that the law is as old as Greece:—

Ποικιλόθρον' 'αθάνατ' Αφρόδιτα,
Παῖ Δίος δολοπλόκε, λισσομαί σε
Μή μ' ἄσαισι, μήτ' 'ονίαισι δάμνα,
Πότνια θῦμον.

Compare also the opening sentences of the Iliad and the Odyssey.

As you droop'd from the sky low down as if to my side, (while the other stars all look'd on,)
As we wander'd together the solemn night, (for something I know not what kept me from sleep,)
As the night advanced, and I saw on the rim of the west how full you were of woe,
As I stood on the rising ground in the breeze in the cool transparent night,
As I watch'd where you pass'd and was lost in the netherward black of the night,
As my soul in its trouble dissatisfied sank, as where you sad orb,
Concluded, dropt in the night, and was gone.

These flowing epic lines are the counterpart in English of Homer's hexameters, and are the only possible hexameters for us. They have the required weight and momentum, are strong enough to bear the pressure of the thought, and are the first true, unborrowed heroics ever written in a Germanic tongue. It is doubtless true, as Dr. O. W. Holmes has pointed out, that the ten-syllable line owes much of its impressiveness to the sense of difficulty we have in the reading, since a longer respiration than ordinary is required for each line; but this advantage will not overbalance the other defects. Ours is an age of great and difficult thoughts. Now, a great poet always reflects the ideas and passions of his own day. And just as in a painting showing action all the lines must be agitated or undulating, in sympathy with the leading emotional purpose, and not horizontal, angular, and regular, as in a painting showing repose, so our poet's irregular and fluent twenty-syllable lines are in harmony with the agitated nature of his leading motives, —as well as with the spirit of the age,—and suit the largeness of his themes.

Many have noted the resemblances between Oriental poetry and portions of *Leaves of Grass*. In looking over Mr. Charles James Lyall's "Translations of Ancient Arabian Poetry," I find striking resemblances in line-structure between the Arabian poetry and that of Whitman. Note especially that with the

Arabs the natural length of the thought is the measure of the length of the line, and that the translator preserves in his renderings the original metres:—

(1) Fadat nafsî wamâ malakat yamînî fawârisa saddakat fîhim dhunûnî.
My life and my wealth, yea, all that is mine, be ransom against Time's wrong for those who showed true my forecast!

(2) Fadhâka karî' ud-dahri, mâ 'âsha hûwalun: idhâ suddha minhû mankharun, jâsha mankharû.
Against him the Wild Days dash—he meets them with cunning mind: is one of his nostrils stopped? he breathes through the other free.

(3) Wamâ ukhmidat nârun lanâ dûna târikin, walâ dhammanâ fin-nâzilîna nazîlû.
Our beacon is never quenched to wanderers of the night, nor e'er has a guest blamed us where men meet together.

Here are some Whitmanesque lines in the favorite Tawîl metre:—

I thought who would weep for me, and none did I find to mourn but only my sword, my spear, the best of Rudainah's store,
And one friend, a sorrel steed, who goes forth with trailing rein to drink at the pool, since Death has left none to draw for him.*

All Oriental peoples delight in books written in mingled prose and verse: such are the "Gulistan" of Saadi, and "The Arabian Nights' Entertainments."

The Chinese have their Wau-chang, or "fine writing," which exhibits a parallelism of sentences in a kind of measured prose. In the Chinese Tze, rhymes are repeated at the end of lines of indeterminate length.

The poetry of the Persians as well as that of the Ottomans is from Arabian sources. With all of these peoples the invariable base upon which verse is built is the *beyt*, or couplet. In the Ottoman verse-form called *gazel*, *each beyt must contain a complete thought*. There is usually no connection

* For hundreds of specimens of Hindu-Arabian poetry see G. de Tassy, "Histoire de la Littérature Hindouie."

between the *beyts*, so that they have been likened to pearls strung on a thread. The thread makes them into one necklace, but the value of the necklace lies in each pearl, not in the thread. In this respect also, Whitman's verses—many of them —have Oriental peculiarities.

A glance at Persian verse shows striking similarities, as Lord Strangford has remarked,* between the poets of Persia and the new bard of the West.

I notice that even the typographical arrangement of the Persian characters is that of Whitman. Here are two quatrains from Sir Gore Ouseley. The first is on the "Unity of God," and is by Ferdusi: the second, by Hafiz:—

"Thou art the highest in the world, yet art thou present in the lowest profundity: I know not what, but whatever thou art, thou art."

"Like the Simárgh, why shouldst thou attempt to climb the mountain Káf? Rather, like the little sparrow, gather in thy wings and feathers, and retire."

Finally, notice the similarity of the verses of the old Vedic hymns to those of Walt Whitman. Max Müller (History of Ancient Sanscrit Literature, London, 1860, p. 149) speaks of single lines in the Vedas of sixty-eight syllables each. These hymns are familiar to most readers, but I add one verse (or line) for the sake of completer illustration:—

O Agni, thou from whom, as a new-born male, undying flames proceed, the brilliant smoke goes towards the sky, for as messenger thou art sent to the gods.

A device of Whitman's which gives enormous weight to certain of his shorter poems consists in suspending the main thought, or conclusion, until the very close, exfoliating the master thought through a perfect maze of intermediate and parenthetical clauses, and no drawing of breath allowed until the climax. There is in these poems something like the spiral

* *Pall Mall Gazette*, Feb. 16, 1866.

movement in nature,—the idea winding and winding until it bursts into bright bloom at the top of the outermost spray. Again, beauty is flowing form. Take as a type a waterfall: the fascination consists not wholly in the new curves and colors that leap into being as it spills its cool silver from ledge to ledge, but, fundamentally, in the interruption of the equilibrium, or symmetry, of the stream, and our desire to see this restored. So with the thought of Whitman as it drops from line to line through his poems of withheld conclusion. Or, again, one might liken them to the symbol of existence,—the spiral of Elihu Vedder's Omar Khayyam,—first gathering up out of infinity the elements of life into the spiral knot, then, reversing the movement, the outward sweep at death and final dispersion into the infinite again. So the poet's thought, gathered out of the boundless field of life, focussed at his poem's close, and thence dispersed into the minds of his readers.

Dr. R. M. Bucke sends me a thoughtful paragraph on Whitman's poetic vehicle. "It is the old story," he says, "of evolution by increase of heterogeneity. The expression follows, as closely as it can, the thing to be expressed, and branches with it; is simple where the mind is simple, and gets more complex as the mind gets more complex. See the homogeneity of form as well as of thought of the Rig Veda, the Homeric poems, the book of Job. The writers of these could not use the language of such modern poets as Tennyson or Swinburne, because they had not the corresponding shades and diversities of thought and feeling. Yet the verse of the old writers was fitted to their times."

Carlyle furnishes a conspicuous instance of a man of glowing poetical nature and of great thoughts who found the jacket of verse too small for his wear. While struggling to bring his "Cromwell" to the birth, he wrote in his journal (see Froude's "Carlyle in London," Chap. XI.) that he seemed sunk fifty miles deep beyond all human articulation, and that if he ever

rose to speak again he must raise whole continents with him. "I often wish," he said, "I could write rhyme. A new form from centre to surface, unlike what I find anywhere in myself or others, would alone be appropriate for the indescribable chiaroscuro and waste bewilderment of this subject."

And he did work out a new vehicle for his more intense thought. It is found, for example, in the speeches of "Latter Day Pamphlets,"—as in this about Hudson's Statue :—

"Well, then, persist; set up your Brazen Calf, ye misguided citizens, and worship it, you, since you will and can. But, observe, let it be done in secret: not in public; we say, in secret, at your peril! You have pleased to create a new Monster into this world; but to make him patent to public view, we, for our part, beg not to please. Observe, therefore. Build a high enough brick case or joss-house for your Brazen Calf; with undiaphanous walls, and lighted by sky-windows only: put your Monster into that, and keep him there. Thither go at your pleasure, there assemble yourselves, and worship your bellyful, you absurd idolaters; ruin your own souls only, and leave the poor Population alone; the poor, speechless, unconscious Population, whom we are bound to protect, and will!"

Read also the rhapsody on the Church in Pamphlet No. 8 of the same volume; and read again the wonderful words in "Sartor" describing the stormy passage of mankind across the astonished earth.

But let any one who will learn the inmost secret of poetic art study Whitman's Burial Hymn of President Lincoln, a poem which will one day be set to music by some great composer to form a national oratorio, and which was long ago pronounced by the poet Swinburne to be "the most sweet and sonorous nocturne ever chanted in the church of the world."*

* William Blake: A Critical Essay, 1868, p. 300.

"Next to the grief and love of the people," says W. D. O'Connor, "it is the grandest and the only grand funeral music poured around Lincoln's bier." Scarcely, indeed, since Homer, has such a thunder-roll of rhythmic harmony been heard in literature as undulates through this splendid threne; while of its delicate adaptation of line and rhythm to changing motive there is, it is needless to say, no hint in Iliad or Odyssey. In the first cluster of lines the subject and motive of the whole piece are announced. Then comes a massive spondaic line,—

O powerful western fallen star !—

like the heavy-footed bass of the viol in a Dead-March. Then, as a relief to the emotional tension, there is a sudden transition to nature,—the lilac bush, the thrush, cedars dim, silver star, and gray old woods spotted with violets. Now the curtains of the finite roll back, and only we see the vast landscapes of the continent shimmering and gleaming in the richness of the approaching summer. In the midst of this rise the flute notes of the thrush :—

Sing on, sing on, you gray-brown bird,

. . . . . .

Sing on, dearest brother, warble your reedy song,
Loud human song, with voice of uttermost woe.

Then, mastered by his emotion, and holding the hand of Death, the poet rushes forth into the hiding, receiving night, and in the solitude of the dusky cedar swamp pours forth his soul in that wonderful hymn to death :—

Come, lovely and soothing death.

And now the eyes of his soul glare with a weird clairvoyance right into the heart of the great mystery; and, with a loud triumphant *Io Pæan !* he announces victory over the last darkness. By this time we are wrought up to a high pitch of emotion. And here the supreme art of the poet is seen; for

our thoughts are gently unkeyed and dropped to their ordinary moods by a melodious repetition of preceding motives,—as often in the musical dramas of Wagner. And when at last the majestic chant comes to an end, and the yearning music of the solemn tubes rolls no more through the soul, it dies away with the low reverberations of a retreating thunder-storm "moaning and calling out of other lands," and leaves us still gazing at the page, and hushed into one of those deep trances of sacred harmony in which we take no note of the lapse of time. If any proof were needed of the superiority of the spontaneous style to the Dutch garden one, it would be afforded, in the case of this poem, by the slight shock we experience in suddenly passing, at the close of the unrhymed portion of the dirge, to the tinkling rhymes of "O Captain! my Captain!" Not that this, too, is not beautiful and pathetic; but it jars slightly upon the feelings excited by the solemn rhythm of the preceding *Trauermarsch*, and should therefore be read alone,—just as one would wish to study at different times the cool tempered colors of a cathedral fresco and the rich and sparkling lights of a painting in oil.

What a contrast, by the way, between the tremendous emotion of this Burial Hymn and the cool, measured grief of Milton in his beautiful "Lycidas"! Each laments a lost friend, each goes to nature for solace and for imagery to embellish his thought, but the difference between the two is all the difference between the Classic and the Romantic schools of thought. Milton has all the reserve of an Englishman of the world. The grief is well-bred and decorous. The bucolic mask and classic machinery savor of the lamp and the dictionary.

> "Begin, then, Sisters of the sacred well,
> Begin, and somewhat loudly sweep the string."

Somewhat loudly! No passionate Celtic exclamations, but let all be done with reserve and decorum.

Whitman's struggle for poetical reform in America is singularly paralleled by that of Victor Hugo in France. Hugo inaugurated in that country the Romantic Movement, which, in his own profound words, is essentially but a phase of the general movement of society toward liberty.* In freeing poetry from the shackles of Classicism, he encountered as terrible a storm of ridicule and hatred (even his life being threatened), extending through as long a period of years, as did Whitman in America. The chief difference between the two cases is that Victor Hugo, after a battle of twenty years, came off triumphant: supported by a band of illustrious disciples, he succeeded in crushing the hydra, Classicism, gaining at length the enthusiastic support of men who at first loathed his novel style; while, on the other hand, bourgeois America, caring little for great literature of any sort, has not so much adopted the innovations of her representative democrat as she is coming silently to endure them. I mean not by any means that the American people have discovered and paid homage to their poet as the French discovered and worshipped theirs, but only that the American literary circle is slowly unlearning its contempt for the new style, and beginning to see that it is a logical continuation of the Romantic Movement in Europe. Just as in France the literary mind has now come to understand—what fifty years ago it could not understand—that a poet may refuse to make his verses run two and two like yoked oxen, and still not be considered fit for medical treatment or the mad-house, so in America there is growing up a vague feeling that pruned and mechanically measured verse is essentially foreign to the Anglo-Saxon race instincts. For the Classic, or Latin, style is

* "La liberté littéraire," he says, in the preface to "Hernani," "est fille de la liberté politique. . . . Or, après tant de grandes choses que nos pères ont faites et que nous avons vues, nous voilà sortis de la vieille forme sociale; comment ne sortirions-nous pas de la vieille forme poétique?"

calm, unadorned, precise, sculpturesque; but the Romantic, or Germanic, style (like the Germanic spirit in religion and art) is —when spontaneous—glowing, complex, florid, irregular, spiritual, rich in suggestion. Certain it is that by our present poetical machinery the free creative energy of genius is materially injured. By the current system poetical thought is in its metrical moulds

Locked up like veins of metal cramped and screwed.

The man who can strike the blow that will undo the dreary enchantment will by that act forward the cause of social and political liberty, as well as that of poetry.

Let it be distinctly understood that, while I have drawn a parallel between Victor Hugo and Walt Whitman, as regards their radicalism in poetical reform, I should wish distinctly and emphatically to assert that the Whitmanesque reform in style —*as illustrated in its best specimens*,—is as far in advance of that of Hugo as his was in advance of Classicism. Whitman's method dislinks entirely from all past theories. We find the poetical forms of Hugo as tiresome in their slavish adherence to rhyme-jingles as the Romanticists did the terrible monotony of dualism in the paired lines of the old French dramatists.

Nothing is more curious or significant of the limitations of the mind of even so brave a thinker as Emerson than his inability to recognise the worth of the new rhythms of Walt Whitman, who is precisely the kind of poet for whom he was always calling, and who would even seem to have taken hints for his heresy from the Concord oracle. Read and ponder the following citations from Emerson :—

"The difference between poetry and stock poetry is this, that in the latter the rhythm is given, and the sense adapted to it, while in the former the sense dictates the rhythm." "It is not style or rhymes, or a new image more or less, that imports, but sanity; that life should not be mean. . . . A little more or less skill in whistling is of no account." "Bring

us poetry which finds its rhymes and cadences in the rhymes and iterations of nature." "We will leave to the masters their own form. Newton may be permitted to call Terence a play-book, and to *wonder at the frivolous taste of rhymers; he only predicts, one would say, a grander poetry* [Italics mine]: he only shows that he is not yet reached; that the poetry which satisfies more youthful souls is not such, to a mind like his, accustomed to grander harmonies,—this being a child's whistle to his ear; that the music must rise to a loftier strain—up to Handel, up to Beethoven, up to the thorough-bass of the sea-shore, up to the largeness of astronomy: at last the great heart will hear in the music beats like its own: the waves of melody will wash and float him also, and set him into concert and harmony."

But, leaving the Emersonian puzzle as insoluble, let me note, with Mr. Stedman, that the rhythmic and melodic sense of Walt Whitman has been a growth. The pieces of the first quarto (and many later ones, too) contain only here and there a trace of rhythm or metrical form. It will be found, on inspection, that the poems composed during and after the war of 1860-65 (chants of war, religion, and the sea) have a new and grander rhythm, as if the excitement of war and the personal suffering of the poet had served to bring out the latent music of his soul. For the god only descends upon us, and our thoughts only begin to flow into musical moulds, when we are at the highest pitch of emotion. In the early poems the intensity and power are more fictitious and self-evolved, a matter of the imagination; but in the *post-bellum* productions the limestone of his nature was blanched into the perfect marble. In the later poems, his words, as some one has said of Carlyle's, seem electrified into an energy of lineament, like the faces of men aflame with passion. And music is passion-born.

The language of Whitman is as purely transparent and simple a vehicle of thought as was ever used. A young

child can understand these home words, root words, accents of the cradle, the fireside, the street, the field. The words are indeed like leaves of grass (and note that the life-giving grains —sugar-cane, maize, and wheat—are, by botanical affinity, true grasses),—the grass, loved and understood by all, excluding none, hardy, sweet, nutritious, inexpugnable, growing everywhere,—in the fields of the poor and of the rich, in the little crofts of the peasant, in the window-box of the city seamstress, in the poor slave's garden-patch, on the rich sweep of park or lawn, covering prairie and mountain with its verdure, universal, pure and free. Whitman's page is solid and genuine,—the purity of minerals born of fiery vapours, the gold of wheat (all the chaff and straw winnowed out), a rich show of pure and fresh fruits, or a piece of polished gold and silver mechanism. He has followed Landor's rule, never to look abroad for any kind of ornament; and, with that poet, he hates false words, seeking with care, difficulty, and moroseness, those that fit the thing. Every word is weighed; not one superfluous, any more than the least particle of color in a great painting is superfluous. Like the Elizabethan writers (our literature was *creative* when they wrote), he makes his own diction, if he does not find it to his hand. Like the Elizabethans, he is fond of turning nouns into active verbs.

There is a good deal of slang in Whitman's early "recitatives," but it is of very rare occurrence in the later ones. In his early poems of revolt and self-assertion, these slang terms, doubtless, seemed to him necessary to help to give emphasis to his doctrines of democracy and equality. They somehow grate on our lugs; yet, if you will observe, you will find that they are only the words of common conversation, and seem strange only because met with in literature. And many that seem slang are purely technical and idiomatic terms.* By the way, Walt

* Here is a list of technical, idiomatic, or slang terms from the early poems, chiefly the "Song of Myself":—

seems to have got at least one form of expression from his favorite "Border Minstrelsy," as in this from Vol. I. xv.: "The boldest men and the hottest *that ever I saw any nation.*"

A great deal of fun has been made of Whitman's "catalogues," his single-line vignettes, because they have been viewed apart from their setting, the indispensable *ensemble.* Emerson tells us that the "inexorable rule in the Muses' court, either inspiration or silence, compels the bard to report only his supreme moments." And on this theory he built up his prose and poetry. But Whitman thinks differently. He criticises Emerson because his writings are all butter and sugar and cake. He rightly thinks that beauty must have its foil, the picture its body-color, and sculptures a wall-mass, on which they may be disposed; that the *oscuro* is needed to give edge and brilliancy to the *chiaro*, the dark cumulus cloud to relieve the kinky gold of the lightning, toil to sweeten rest, and night to soothe the garish day. If Whitman had but cast his prosaic interludes in lines of deathful symmetry, or fitted them with fool's-caps of rhyme, all would have been considered very proper. But why need we shrug our shoulders over these portions of his work? Take them for what they are worth, or omit them entirely if you choose. Their author himself assumes little for them. The very title, *Leaves of Grass*, might have advertised the critics of this, were they ever in the habit of looking for anything not on the surface of things. Leaves of grass, man; spears of grass—nothing more. No

Chuff (of one's hand), kelson, entretied, king-pin, heave 'e 'yo, fakes, sheer (the long curve of a ship's deck—"The lithe *sheer* of their waists plays even with their massive arms"), blab, slue, carlacue, tenoned, ducking, drowse (verb), foo-foos, tusselled (hay), hefts, scooting, flex, gulp, quahaug, swap, stuccoed (with quadrupeds and birds), gulch, puts out (the brook from roots of old tree), he-festivals, sqush (of cider), topples (of ice), knuckle down, dribs (of gore), snag-toothed, hoot-hoot, flukes, koboo, bussing, scud, jags.

greater unity or interdependence claimed for them than you can find in the grass of the field; a collection (that first quarto) of aphorisms, *mots*, "says," nothing more; like the Proverbs of Solomon, which have enjoyed a moderate popularity in their day, or like the verses of Saadi and Khayyám, which have no organic unity worth mentioning. They are what they are, have their value, are mostly pleasant reading: let that suffice. It has been well said in their favour by Professor Dowden that they often give the impression of vastness and multiplicity as nothing else could. They strike me—some of them—as being memoranda for poems (just as the richer pictures of his later "Specimen Days" were, by his own admission), *motifs* set down for future poets, an inventory of materials now that we are closing up the old business of petty literature, and opening up the new account with science and modern wonders.* As M. Léo Quesnel says, "Les *descriptions* poétiques, telles qu'il est de l'essence de la littérature d'en faire, sont pour Whitman superflues. Que le nom évoque l'image, c'est assez: l'esprit du lecteur fera le reste."

In these lists, or enumerations, he is like a zoölogist or botanist lovingly specifying his beautiful shells or flowers—each a miracle of grace,

> "Made so fairily well
> With delicate spere and whirl,"

each divine, and enclosing a portion of the Absolute Soul. Here is the pure Greek sentiment that produced them, in these lines from his "Inscriptions":—

> "Beginning my studies the first step pleas'd me so much,
> The mere fact consciousness, these forms, the power of motion,
> The least insect or animal, the senses, eyesight, love,
> The first step I say awed me and pleas'd me so much,
> I have hardly gone and hardly wish'd to go any farther,
> But stop and loiter all the time to sing it in ecstatic songs."

* Cf. "Song for Occupations," § 5, near end.

One cause of the displeasure the "lists" give, apart from their disconnection, is, I think, that they boldly introduce into a body of poetry subjects ordinarily regarded as unpoetical. The conventional littérateurs have all composed on the Emersonian butter and sugar theory. But the great poets know how to exalt and poetize common things. It is rather droll to find Emerson reporting only his supreme moments, cutting out of his thought-structures all the braces and beams and walls except the bare skeleton needed to keep the pictures on the walls in their places, and then turning to others and saying, We must

> "Give to barrows, trays, and pans
> Grace and glimmer of romance,"

and "beauty must come back to the useful arts, and the distinction between the fine and the useful arts be forgotten." And once more: "The poet, who reattaches things to nature and the Whole,—reattaching even artificial things, and violations of nature, to nature, by a deeper insight,—disposes very easily of the most disagreeable facts. Readers of poetry see the factory village and the railway, and fancy that the poetry of the landscape is broken up by these; for these works of art are not yet consecrated in their reading; but the poet sees them fall within the great Order not less than the beehive or the spider's geometrical web."

But it is only the *great* poet who has the courage and the power so to see things. It is only a Homer or a Whitman who will pass by the pomp and circumstance of life to glorify some mean and "vulgar" thing,—as the parting sun will sometimes turn and speed over the shoulder of the world an arrow dipped in gold to set ablaze the windows of some mountain cottage, or burn a needle's eye through the slender village spire, leaving the casements of the proud palace in the plain all blank and undistinguished. The old Gothic architects, in the days when architecture was living, understood this matter. They were not afraid

to put the most familiar things into their sculptures and their illuminated windows. In the windows of Chartres cathedral, which were presented by the tradesmen of the town, said tradesmen are represented at their several works,—smiths at their anvils, curriers scraping hides, tanners at their pits, merchants at their counters.

You will find nothing in *Leaves of Grass* more "prosaic" than many passages in Homer,—the dismemberment of animals for sacrifice, Achilles cutting pork chops for Ulysses, the washing of soiled linen by Nausicaa and her maidens, and the like. Here, in literal translation, is Homer's description of a family washing-day: "They took the clothes in their hands; and poured on the clean water; and trod them in trenches thoroughly, trying who could do it best; and, when they had washed them and got off all the dirt, they spread them out on the sea-beach, where the sea had blanched the shingle cleanest." (John Ruskin's translation). In the Odyssey the Cyclops thus makes a meal: "He sprang up, and laid his hands upon my fellows, and, clutching two together, dashed them, as they had been whelps, to the earth, and the brain flowed forth upon the ground, and the earth was wet. Then cut he them up piecemeal, and made ready his supper. So he ate even as a mountain-bred lion, and ceased not, devouring entrails and flesh and bones with their marrow. . . . And after the Cyclops had filled his huge maw with human flesh and the milk he drank thereafter, he lay within the cave, stretched out among his sheep" (Butcher and Lang's translation). And here is the description of the swineherd's dwelling, from the opening of Book XIV. of the Odyssey; it is marvellously like passages of *Leaves of Grass*, but I cannot help that. Let me simply cut up into Whitmanesque lines the version of Butcher and Lang (the latest standard):—

"With stones dragged thither had he builded it, and coped it with a fence of white thorn,
And he had split an oak to the dark core, and without he had driven stakes the whole length thereof on either side, set thick and close;
And within the courtyard he made twelve styes hard by one another to be beds for the swine,
And in each stye fifty grovelling swine were penned, brood swine; but the boars slept without."

I suppose the reader will admit a *slight* tinge of the prosaic in these descriptions? If he or she will do so, I for my part will admit that I find in my poet a greater proportion of prosaic enumerations than I could desire, nor do I defend them all as poetry by any means; they are the foil and background of the poetical and musical portions. Taken alone, they are rather wearisome, reminding you of what Leigh Hunt said of Wordsworth,—"He is a fine lettuce with too many outer leaves;" or of Martin Luther's idle priest (mentioned in the "Table-Talk") who, instead of reciting his breviary, used to run over the alphabet, and then say "O my God, take this alphabet, and put it together how you will!" or of Boileau's Pluto who thought that "tout ce qui se peut dire de beau est dans les dictionnaires,—il n'y a que les paroles qui sont transposées."

Whitman shares with all great poets a love of symbolism or mystery,—"that inexplicable element of every highest poetic nature which causes it to cover up and involve its real purpose and meanings in folded removes and far recesses" (his own words). It is an attribute of the Universe, which is itself a poem ("ressemble plus à une poëme qu'à une machine"), and, sublimely taciturn, forever hides its ends in darkness. I would not deny that Whitman sometimes leans faultily to obscurity, especially in some portions of the "Song of Myself;" and yet, with few exceptions, there is in the oracular portions of *Leaves of Grass* little, if anything, that will not reveal its meaning to the patient thinker who has first put himself *en rapport* with its author's philosophical standpoint. "In the

seemingly mean details of 'Wilhelm Meister,'" said Goethe, "lies always at bottom a high meaning, which he who has eye, knowledge of the world, and power of comprehension to infer the great from the little, will detect; to others, let it suffice to receive the picture of life as real life." You have got to sharpen your pick-axe if you are going to exploit the gold-bearing quartz of Whitman. It will pay to work the veins of his pages well. There are fresh springs, too; something under the surface, like the mokuri and leroshúra water-tubers of the parched African savannas. There are thoughts in his poems which root far down in the abysm of the mind,—like vast water-stems of the Sargasso Sea, and, like them, branching upward in innumerable filaments, out of the region of eternal calm, till they reach the swell and tangle of the surface. As the Protean Essence of life speaks through a thousand masks, so in reading *Leaves of Grass* you often find that without warning the voice of the poet issues from the mouth of another or others. It is very singular, this feature, the mystic blending of your soul and the poet's. Before you are aware of it, you find that *it is yourself who is speaking;* the *I* belongs to you; his voice speaks through your voice. Frequently also the bard assumes the place of the Absolute, of which he is a part. You must look sharp to trace the transits—swifter than lightning behind the screen of the invisible—of this metempsychosist, this rushing Brahm swathed in murk and cloud. Again the poet actually descends into the printed page, speaks as from the whispering type, "to you, up there, whoever you are." ("How Solemn as One by One"; and see "Wound Dresser," § 2.)

Whitman's style has been called Greek. So it is, preëminently. But it is something more. He is what a Greek would have been with the addition of the pantheistic or cosmic element. By the suggestiveness and mystery of his thought, he affines with the Romanticists. And yet you cannot class him with such members of that school as Hugo, Richter, St. Pierre,

Tieck. He is rather a Romanticist of the Walter Scott type. The fire and suggestiveness of the Romantic style is his, combined with the naked and realistic statement of the classic. His dithyrambic (in a few cases Bacchantic) thought is never, as with the Romanticists, enveloped in a haze of accessory and subordinate ideas. I think E. C. Stedman's characterization of Whitman as "the most subjective poet on record" might be a little misleading as it stands. Whitman is certainly objective, Greek, in the general cast of his thought. Indeed, next to the Greeks, he seems to me the most objective poet on record, and at the same time the most personal. We must distinguish in his case between the personal and the ordinary subjective, for two reasons: first, his personalism is often only apparent and formal, because he typifies humanity in himself; and, second, when it is actually egoistic, it is usually so firmly welded to the objective method of presentation as to differ in a marked degree from the ordinary subjectivism of the reflective poets, such as Wordsworth. Whitman expresses his own emotion and excites ours by presenting before us the *objects or pictures* associated with the emotion. Take the "Salut au Monde," a poem voicing the sentiment of hospitality toward all other nationalities—a theme fraught with great emotion; and yet in the whole piece there are not above a half-dozen lines directly expressing the feelings: the desired effect is produced by simply projecting on the canvas a series of pictures of all the countries and landscapes of the world. So "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry"—a markedly personal poem—is little more than a series of pictures, or rather actions (see Lessing on Homer, the Laocoön, etc.), these occupying the entire foreground, and producing in us deep emotion; while the emotion of *the poet* is given a subordinate position, or rather is not once alluded to in the whole piece. The method is just that of Tennyson in his lyric, "Tears, Idle Tears" (the disappearing ship, glimmering square of glass, etc.). The

same method of treatment appears in Whitman's Sea-Drift pieces, in "Memories of President Lincoln," and "Drum Taps." I deem this massive objectivity one of his surest titles to immortality. Subjective writers are always inferior.

Whitman's interesting prose writings are of two kinds, looking at their manner or style; namely, that of simple narrative, which is very pleasant and easy, and that which he uses when he puts on his thinking-cap for profounder work. The latter sometimes seems to be a kind of Tarn-kappe or Pluto's helmet —makes his thoughts invisible. Synthetic and involved in the extreme, it has been well styled, by Mr. Stedman, agglomerative. It exactly fails to meet Herbert Spencer's definition of a good style; that is to say, it does *not* economize the recipient's attention. Yet it is characteristic of the man, and suits the huge swing of his thought. It must be allowed, too, that it is no more involved and difficult than Carlyle's later style, or that of Milton and Jean Paul. Whitman's prose writings, I will say in passing, present an indispensable key and commentary to *Leaves of Grass*—reveal the milieu of them, the poet's habits of study, methods of composition, favourite reading, and the sources of his inspiration. His fascinating "Notes of a Half-paralytic," as Professor Dowden styles them, (or nature-studies), are as wholesome and classic reading as we have had for many a day. In all of his nature-notes he has the knack of catching and formulating the subtle and impalpable phases of life.

Will Whitman's manner of poetic composition be accepted by the world? I think the general principles on which it is based will be, must be, if poetry is to live. Not that anybody else will or should imitate Whitman's idiosyncrasies. There have been some gruesome failures by direct imitators of him. But the poets will surely henceforth never be the slaves they have been, in many kinds of elevated poetry, to degrading mechanical symmetry and word-sawing. The poetry of the

future will be fluent, spontaneous, and at the same time, profoundly rhythmic. The influence of Walt Whitman upon contemporary thought, especially abroad, has been deep, and is remarked by many observers. Nothing is so potent an engine of reform as the glowing thought of a great poet. A thousand men could not, by the use of poles and fires, free a forest of its armor of ice in many months; but the sun will accomplish the task in an hour or so on the rising of the temperature a few degrees.

It has been noted that Whitman is not yet in the dictionaries of quotations. If so, the worse for the dictionaries. Printed books and magazines are full of citations from *Leaves of Grass*. One reason, doubtless, why his writings are not yet in these dictionaries is the wooden-headed nature of their compilers. (Nearly all pedants, preachers, and librarians seem to have by instinct a deep hatred of Whitman.) Another reason is that his writings are not to any great extent apothegmatic, because, firstly, they have such tremendous swing and length of line, and, secondly, because many of them are suggestive and mystical. These consist of pure disembodied emotion. The words are purposely made ordinary and inconspicuous in order not to distract attention from the thought.

"The words of my book nothing, the drift of it everything,
A book separate, not linked with the rest nor felt by the intellect,
But you ye untold latencies will thrill to every page."

Suggestive and mystical sayings are not always or to so great an extent as portable as are objective dicta, *mots* and epigrams. Yet such lines as those in the following list from *Leaves of Grass* have been current in literature for years:

"The running blackberry would adorn the parlors of heaven,
And the cow, crunching with depressed head, surpasses any statue."

Of the grass,

"I guess it is the handkerchief of the Lord,
A scented gift and remembrancer designedly dropped,
* * * * * *
And now it seems to me the beautiful uncut hair of graves."

"Vivas to those who have failed."

"My foothold is tenoned and mortised in granite,
I laugh at what you call dissolution,
And I know the amplitude of time."

"The katydid works her chromatic reed on the walnut-tree over the well."

"The little plentiful manikins skipping around in collars and tailed coats."

"I am an acme of things accomplished, and I an encloser of things to be. * * *
Rise after rise bow the phantoms behind me,
Afar down I see the huge first Nothing, I know I was even there."

"Old age superbly rising! O welcome ineffable grace of dying days!"

"The orchestra whirls me wider than Uranus flies."

Of the carpenter—

"The tongue of his foreplane whistles its wild ascending lisp."

"The press of my foot to the earth springs a hundred affections."

"The soft voluptuous opiate shades" [of twilight].

"Produce great persons, the rest follows."

"Fear grace, elegance, civilization, delicatesse,
Fear the mellow sweet, the sucking of honey-juice,
Beware the advancing mortal ripening of Nature,
Beware what precedes the decay of the ruggedness of States and men."

"Long and long has the grass been growing,
Long and long has the rain been falling,
Long has the globe been rolling round."

"Come lovely and soothing Death,
Serenely arriving, arriving," etc.

"Logic and sermons never convince,
The damp of night drives deeper into my soul."

FINIS.