

MEMORANDA

[Let me indeed turn upon myself a little of the light I have been so fond of casting on others.

Of course these few exceptional later mems are far, far short of one's concluding history or thoughts or life-giving--only a hap-hazard pinch of all. But the old Greek proverb put it, "Anybody who really has a good quality" (or bad one either, I guess) "has all." There's something in the proverb; but you mustn't carry it too far.

I will not reject any theme or subject because the treatment is too personal.

As my stuff settles into shape, I am told (and sometimes myself discover, uneasily, but feel all right about it in calmer moments) it is mainly autobiographic, and even egotistic after all--which I finally accept, and am contented so.

If this little volume betrays, as it doubtless does, a weakening hand, and decrepitude, remember it is knit together out of accumulated sickness, inertia, physical disablement, acute pain, and listlessness. My fear will be that at last my pieces show indooredness, and being chain'd to a chair--as never before. Only the resolve to keep up, and on, and to add a remnant, and even perhaps obstinately see what

failing powers and decay may contribute too, have produced it.

And now as from some fisherman's net hauling all sorts, and disbursing the same.]

A WORLD'S SHOW

New York, Great Exposition open'd in 1853.--I went a long time (nearly a year)--days and nights--especially the latter--as it was finely lighted, and had a very large and copious exhibition gallery of paintings (shown at best at night, I tho't)--hundreds of pictures from Europe, many masterpieces--all an exhaustless study--and, scatter'd thro' the building, sculptures, single figures or groups--among the rest, Thorwaldsen's "Apostles," colossal in size--and very many fine bronzes, pieces of plate from English silversmiths, and curios from everywhere abroad--with woods from all lands of the earth--all sorts of fabrics and products and handiwork from the workers of all nations.

NEW YORK--THE BAY--THE OLD NAME

Commencement of a gossipy travelling letter in a New York city paper, May 10, 1879.--My month's visit is about up; but before I get back to Camden let me print some jottings of the last four weeks. Have you not, reader dear, among your intimate friends, some one, temporarily absent, whose letters to you, avoiding all the big topics and disquisitions, give only minor, gossipy sights and scenes--just as they come--subjects disdain'd by solid writers, but interesting to you because they were such as happen to everybody, and were the moving entourage to your friend--to his or her steps, eyes, mentality? Well, with an idea something of that kind, I suppose, I set out on the following hurrygraphs of a breezy early-summer visit to New York city and up the North river--especially at present of some hours along Broadway.

What I came to New York for.--To try the experiment of a lecture--to see whether I could stand it, and whether an audience could--was my specific object. Some friends had invited me--it was by no means clear how it would end--I stipulated that they should get only a third-rate hall, and not sound the advertising trumpets a bit--and so I started. I much wanted something to do for occupation, consistent with my limping and paralyzed state. And now, since it came off, and since neither my hearers nor I myself really collaps'd at the aforesaid lecture, I intend to go up and down the land (in moderation,) seeking whom I may devour, with lectures, and reading of my own poems--short

pulls, however--never exceeding an hour.

Crossing from Jersey city, 5 to 6 P.M.--The city part of the North river with its life, breadth, peculiarities--the amplitude of sea and wharf, cargo and commerce--one don't realize them till one has been away a long time and, as now returning, (crossing from Jersey city to Desbrosses-st.,) gazes on the unrivall'd panorama, and far down the thin-vapor'd vistas of the bay, toward the Narrows--or northward up the Hudson--or on the ample spread and infinite variety, free and floating, of the more immediate views--a countless river series--everything moving, yet so easy, and such plenty of room! Little, I say, do folks here appreciate the most ample, eligible, picturesque bay and estuary surroundings in the world! This is the third time such a conviction has come to me after absence, returning to New York, dwelling on its magnificent entrances--approaching the city by them from any point.

More and more, too, the old name absorbs into me--MANNAHATTA, "the place encircled by many swift tides and sparkling waters." How fit a name for America's great democratic island city! The word itself, how beautiful! how aboriginal! how it seems to rise with tall spires, glistening in sunshine, with such New World atmosphere, vista and action!

A SICK SPELL

Christmas Day, 25th Dec., 1888.--Am somewhat easier and freer to-day and the last three days--sit up most of the time--read and write, and receive my visitors. Have now been in-doors sick for seven months --half of the time bad, bad, vertigo, indigestion, bladder, gastric, head trouble, inertia--Dr. Bucke, Dr. Osler, Drs. Wharton and Walsh--now Edward Wilkins my help and nurse. A fine, splendid, sunny day. My "November Boughs" is printed and out; and my "Complete Works, Poems and Prose," a big volume, 900 pages, also. It is ab't noon, and I sit here pretty comfortable.

TO BE PRESENT ONLY

At the Complimentary Dinner, Camden, New Jersey, May 31, 1889.--Walt Whitman said: My friends, though announced to give an address, there is no such intention. Following the impulse of the spirit, (for I am at least half of Quaker stock) I have obey'd the command to come and look at you, for a minute, and show myself, face to face; which is probably the best I can do. But I have felt no command to make a speech; and shall not therefore attempt any. All I have felt the imperative conviction to say I have already printed in my books of poems or prose; to which I refer any who may be curious. And so, hail and farewell. Deeply acknowledging this deep compliment, with my best respects and love to you personally--to Camden--to New-Jersey, and to all represented here--you must excuse me from any word further.

"INTESTINAL AGITATION"

From Pall-Mall Gazette, London, England, Feb 8, 1890 Mr. Ernest Rhys has just receiv'd an interesting letter from Walt Whitman, dated "Camden, January 22, 1890." The following is an extract from it:

I am still here--no very mark'd or significant change or happening--fairly buoyant spirits, &c.--but surely, slowly ebbing. At this moment sitting here, in my den, Mickle street, by the oakwood fire, in the same big strong old chair with wolf-skin spread over back--bright sun, cold, dry winter day. America continues--is generally busy enough all over her vast demesnes (intestinal agitation I call it,) talking, plodding, making money, every one trying to get on--perhaps to get towards the top--but no special individual signalism--(just as well, I guess.)