

"WALT WHITMAN'S LAST 'PUBLIC'"

The gay and crowded audience at the Art Rooms, Philadelphia, Tuesday night, April 15, 1890, says a correspondent of the Boston Transcript, April 19, might not have thought that W. W. crawl'd out of a sick bed a few hours before, crying,

Dangers retreat when boldly they're confronted,

and went over, hoarse and half blind, to deliver his memoranda and essay on the death of Abraham Lincoln, on the twenty-fifth anniversary of that tragedy. He led off with the following new paragraph:

"Of Abraham Lincoln, bearing testimony twenty-five years after his death--and of that death--I am now my friends before you. Few realize the days, the great historic and esthetic personalities, with him in the centre, we pass'd through. Abraham Lincoln, familiar, our own, an Illinoisian, modern, yet tallying ancient Moses, Joshua, Ulysses, or later Cromwell, and grander in some respects than any of them; Abraham Lincoln, that makes the like of Homer, Plutarch, Shakspeare, eligible our day or any day. My subject this evening for forty or fifty minutes' talk is the death of this man, and how that death will really filter into America. I am not going to tell you anything new; and it is doubtless nearly altogether because I ardently wish to commemorate the hour and martyrdom and name I am here. Oft as the rolling years bring back this hour, let it again, however briefly, be dwelt upon.

For my own part I hope and intend till my own dying day, whenever the 14th and 15th of April comes, to annually gather a few friends and hold its tragic reminiscence. 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 birthstock; 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?"

The most of the poet's address was devoted to the actual occurrences and details of the murder. We believe the delivery on Tuesday was Whitman's thirteenth of it. The old poet is now physically wreck'd. But his voice and magnetism are the same. For the last month he has been under a severe attack of the lately prevailing influenza, the grip, in accumulation upon his previous ailments, and, above all, that terrible paralysis, the bequest of secession war times. He was dress'd last Tuesday night in an entire suit of French Canadian grey wool cloth, with broad shirt collar, with no necktie; long white hair, red face, full beard and moustache, and look'd as though he might weigh two hundred pounds. He had to be help'd and led every step. In five weeks more he will begin his seventy-second year. He is still writing a little.

INGERSOLL'S SPEECH

From the Camden Post, N.J., June 2, 1890 He attends and makes a speech at the celebration of Walt Whitman's birthday.--Walt Whitman is now in his seventy-second year. His younger friends, literary and personal, men and women, gave him a complimentary supper last Saturday night, to note the close of his seventy-first year, and the late curious and unquestionable "boom" of the old man's wide-spreading popularity, and that of his "Leaves of Grass." There were thirty-five in the room, mostly young, but some old, or beginning to be. The great feature was Ingersoll's utterance. It was probably, in its way, the most admirable specimen of modern oratory hitherto delivered in the English language, immense as such praise may sound. It was 40 to 50 minutes long, altogether without notes, in a good voice, low enough and not too low, style easy, rather colloquial (over and over again saying "you" to Whitman who sat opposite,) sometimes markedly impassion'd, once or twice humorous--amid his whole speech, from interior fires and volition, pulsating and swaying like a first-class Andalusian dancer.

And such a critical dissection, and flattering summary! The Whitmanites for the first time in their lives were fully satisfied; and that is saying a good deal, for they have not put their claims low, by a long shot. Indeed it was a tremendous talk! 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 mellow'd wine,

or a just ripe apple; to the artist-sense, too, looks at his best--not merely like a bequeath'd Roman bust or fine smooth marble Cicero-head, or even Greek Plato; for he is modern and vital and vein'd and American, and (far more than the age knows,) justifies us all.

We cannot give a full report of this most remarkable talk and supper (which was curiously conversational and Greek-like) but must add the following significant bit of it.

After the speaking, and just before the close, Mr. Whitman reverted to Colonel Ingersoll's tribute to his poems, pronouncing it the capsheaf of all commendation that he had ever receiv'd. Then, his mind still dwelling upon the Colonel's religious doubts, he went on to say that what he himself had in his mind when he wrote "Leaves of Grass" was not only to depict American life, as it existed, and to show the triumphs of science, and the poetry in common things, and the full of an individual democratic humanity, for the aggregate, but also to show that there was behind all something which rounded and completed it. "For what," he ask'd, "would this life be without immortality? It would be as a locomotive, the greatest triumph of modern science, with no train to draw after it. If the spiritual is not behind the material, to what purpose is the material? What is this world without a further Divine purpose in it all?"

Colonel Ingersoll repeated his former argument in reply.

FEELING FAIRLY

Friday, July 27, 1890.--Feeling fairly these days, and even jovial--sleep and appetite good enough to be thankful for--had a dish of Maryland blackberries, some good rye bread and a cup of tea, for my breakfast--relish' d all--fine weather--bright sun to-day--pleasant northwest breeze blowing in the open window as I sit here in my big rattan chair--two great fine roses (white and red, blooming, fragrant, sent by mail by W. S. K. and wife, Mass.) are in a glass of water on the table before me.

Am now in my 72d year.

OLD BROOKLYN DAYS

It must have been in 1822 or '3 that I first came to live in Brooklyn.

Lived first in Front street, not far from what was then call'd "the New Ferry," wending the river from the foot of Catharine (or Main) street to New York city.

I was a little child (was born in 1819,) but tramp'd freely about the neighborhood and town, even then; was often on the aforesaid New Ferry; remember how I was petted and deadheaded by the gatekeepers and deckhands (all such fellows are kind to little children,) and remember the horses that seem'd to me so queer as they trudg'd around in the central houses of the boats, making the water-power. (For it was just on the eve of the steam-engine, which was soon after introduced on the ferries.) Edward Copeland (afterward Mayor) had a grocery store then at the corner of Front and Catharine streets.

Presently we Whitmans all moved up to Tillary street, near Adams, where my father, who was a carpenter, built a house for himself and us all. It was from here I "assisted" the personal coming of Lafayette in 1824-'5 to Brooklyn. He came over the Old Ferry, as the now Fulton Ferry (partly navigated quite up to that day by "horse boats," though the first steamer had begun to be used hereabouts) was then call'd, and was receiv'd at the foot of Fulton street. It was on that occasion that the corner-stone of the Apprentices' Library, at the corner of Cranberry and Henry streets--since pull'd down--was laid by

Lafayette's own hands. Numerous children arrived on the grounds, of whom I was one, and were assisted by several gentlemen to safe spots to view the ceremony. Among others, Lafayette, also helping the children, took me up--I was five years old, press'd me a moment to his breast--gave me a kiss and set me down in a safe spot. Lafayette was at that time between sixty-five and seventy years of age, with a manly figure and a kind face.

TWO QUESTIONS

An editor of (or in) a leading monthly magazine ("Harper's Monthly," July, 1890,) asks: "A hundred years from now will W.W. be popularly rated a great poet--or will he be forgotten?" ... A mighty ticklish question--which can only be left for a hundred years hence--perhaps more than that. But whether W.W. has been mainly rejected by his own times is an easier question to answer.

All along from 1860 to '91, many of the pieces in L. of G., and its annexes, were first sent to publishers or magazine editors before being printed in the L., and were peremptorily rejected by them, and sent back to their author. The "Eidolons" was sent back by Dr. H., of "Scribner's Monthly" with a lengthy, very insulting and contemptuous letter. "To the Sun-Set Breeze," was rejected by the editor of "Harper's Monthly" as being "an improvisation" only. "On, on ye jocund twain" was rejected by the "Century" editor as being personal merely. Several of the pieces went the rounds of all the monthlies, to be thus summarily rejected.

June, '90.--The----rejects and sends back my little poem, so I am now set out in the cold by every big magazine and publisher, and may as well understand and admit it--which is just as well, for I find I am palpably losing my sight and ratiocination.

PREFACE

To a volume of essays and tales by Wm. D. O'Connor, pub'd
posthumously in 1891

A hasty memorandum, not particularly for Preface to the following
tales, but to put on record my respect and affection for as
sane, beautiful, cute, tolerant, loving, candid and free and
fair-intention'd a nature as ever vivified our race.

In Boston, 1860, I first met William Douglas O'Connor.[48] As I saw
and knew him then, in his 29th year, and for twenty-five further
years along, he was a gallant, handsome, gay-hearted, fine-voiced,
glowing-eyed man; lithe-moving on his feet, of healthy and magnetic
atmosphere and presence, and the most welcome company in the world.
He was a thorough-going anti-slavery believer, speaker and writer,
(doctrinaire,) and though I took a fancy to him from the first,
.I remember I fear'd his ardent abolitionism--was afraid it would
probably keep us apart. (I was a decided and out-spoken anti-slavery
believer myself, then and always; but shy'd from the extremists, the
red-hot fellows of those times.) O'C. was then correcting the proofs
of Harrington, an eloquent and fiery novel he had written, and which
was printed just before the commencement of the secession war. He
was already married, the father of two fine little children, and was
personally and intellectually the most attractive man I had ever met.

Last of '62 I found myself led towards the war-field--went to Washington city--(to become absorb'd in the armies, and in the big hospitals, and to get work in one of the Departments,)--and there I met and resumed friendship, and found warm hospitality from O'C. and his noble New England wife. They had just lost by death their little child-boy, Phillip; and O'C. was yet feeling serious about it. The youngster had been vaccinated against the threatening of small-pox which alarm'd the city; but somehow it led to worse results than it was intended to ward off--or at any rate O'C. thought that proved the cause of the boy's death. He had one child left, a fine bright little daughter, and a great comfort to her parents. (Dear Jeannie! She grew up a most accomplish'd and superior young woman--declined in health, and died about 1881.)

On through for months and years to '73 I saw and talk'd with O'C. almost daily. I had soon got employment, first for a short time in the Indian Bureau (in the Interior Department,) and then for a long while in the Attorney General's Office. The secession war, with its tide of varying fortunes, excitements--President Lincoln and the daily sight of him--the doings in Congress and at the State Capitols--the news from the fields and campaigns, and from foreign governments--my visits to the Army Hospitals, daily and nightly, soon absorbing everything else,--with a hundred matters, occurrences, personalities,--(Greeley, Wendell Phillips, the parties, the Abolitionists, &c.)--were the subjects of our talk and discussion. I am not sure from what I heard then, but O'C. was cut out for a first-class public speaker or

forensic advocate. No audience or jury could have stood out against him. He had a strange charm of physiologic voice. He had a power and sharp-cut faculty of statement and persuasiveness beyond any man's else. I know it well, for I have felt it many a time. If not as orator, his forte was as critic, newer, deeper than any: also, as literary author. One of his traits was that while he knew all, and welcom'd all sorts of great genre literature, all lands and times, from all writers and artists, and not only tolerated each, and defended every attack'd literary person with a skill or heart-catholicism that I never saw equal'd--invariably advocated and excused them--he kept an idiosyncrasy and identity of his own very mark'd, and without special tinge or undue color from any source. He always applauded the freedom of the masters, whence and whoever. I remember his special defences of Byron, Burns, Poe, Rabelais, Victor Hugo, George Sand, and others. There was always a little touch of pensive cadence in his superb voice; and I think there was something of the same sadness in his temperament and nature. Perhaps, too, in his literary structure. But he was a very buoyant, jovial, good-natured companion.

So much for a hasty melanged reminiscence and note of William O'Connor, my dear, dear friend, and staunch, (probably my staunchest) literary believer and champion from the first, and throughout without halt or demur, for twenty-five years. No better friend--none more reliable through this life of one's ups and downs. On the occurrence of the latter he would be sure to make his appearance on the scene,

eager, hopeful, full of fight like a perfect knight of chivalry. For he was a born sample here in the 19th century of the flower and symbol of olden time first-class knighthood. Thrice blessed be his memory! W. W.

Note: [48] Born Jan. 2d, 1832. When grown, lived several years in Boston, and edited journals and magazines there--went about 1861 to Washington, D. C., and became a U.S. clerk, first in the Light-House Bureau, and then in the U.S. Life-Saving Service, in which branch he was Assistant Superintendent for many years--sicken'd in 1887--died there at Washington, May 9th, 1889.

AN ENGINEER'S OBITUARY

From the Engineering Record, New York, Dec. 13, 1890

Thomas Jefferson Whitman was born July 18, 1833, in Brooklyn, N. Y., from a father of English Stock, and mother (Louisa Van Velsor) descended from Dutch (Holland) immigration. His early years were spent on Long Island, either in the country or Brooklyn. As a lad he show'd a tendency for surveying and civil engineering, and about at 19 went with Chief Kirkwood, who was then prospecting and outlining for the great city water-works. He remain'd at that construction throughout, was a favorite and confidant of the Chief, and was successively promoted. He continued also under Chief Moses Lane. He married in 1859, and not long after was invited by the Board of Public Works of St. Louis, Missouri, to come there and plan and build a new and fitting water-works for that great city. Whitman accepted the call, and moved and settled there, and had been a resident of St. Louis ever since. He plann'd and built the works, which were very successful, and remain'd as super-intendent and chief for nearly 20 years.

Of the last six years he has been largely occupied as consulting engineer (divested of his cares and position in St. Louis,) and has engaged in public constructions, bridges, sewers, &c., West and Southwest, and especially the Memphis, Tenn., city water-works.

Thomas J. Whitman was a theoretical and practical mechanic of superior

order, founded in the soundest personal and professional integrity. He was a great favorite among the young engineers and students; not a few of them yet remaining in Kings and Queens counties, and New York city, will remember "Jeff," with old-time good-will and affection. He was mostly self-taught, and was a hard student.

He had been troubled of late years from a bad throat and from gastric affection, tending on typhoid, and had been rather seriously ill with the last malady, but was getting over the worst of it, when he succumb'd under a sudden and severe attack of the heart. He died at St. Louis, November 25, 1890, in his 58th year. Of his family, the wife died in 1873, and a daughter, Mannahatta, died two years ago. Another daughter, Jessie Louisa, the only child left, is now living in St. Louis.

[When Jeff was born I was in my 15th year, and had much care of him for many years afterward, and he did not separate from me. He was a very handsome, healthy, affectionate, smart child, and would sit on my lap or hang on my neck half an hour at a time. As he grew a big boy he liked outdoor and water sports, especially boating. We would often go down summers to Peconic Bay, east end of Long Island, and over to Shelter Island. I loved long rambles, and he carried his fowling-piece. O, what happy times, weeks! Then in Brooklyn and New York city he learn'd printing, and work'd awhile at it; but eventually (with my approval) he went to employment at land surveying, and merged in the studies and work of topographical engineer; this satisfied him,

and he continued at it. He was of noble nature from the first; very good-natured, very plain, very friendly. O, how we loved each other--how many jovial good times we had! Once we made a long trip from New York city down over the Allegheny mountains (the National Road) and via the Ohio and Mississippi rivers, from Cairo to New Orleans.]

God's blessing on your name and memory, dear brother Jeff!

W. W.

OLD ACTORS, SINGERS, SHOWS, &C., IN NEW YORK

Flitting mention--(with much left out)

Seems to me I ought acknowledge my debt to actors, singers, public speakers, conventions, and the Stage in New York, my youthful days, from 1835 onward--say to '60 or '61--and to plays and operas generally. (Which nudges a pretty big disquisition: of course it should be all elaborated and penetrated more deeply--but I will here give only some flitting mentionings of my youth.) Seems to me now when I look back, the Italian contralto Marietta Alboni (she is living yet, in Paris, 1891, in good condition, good voice yet, considering) with the then prominent histrions Booth, Edwin Forrest, and Fanny Kemble and the Italian singer Bettini, have had the deepest and most lasting effect upon me. I should like well if Madame Alboni and the old composer Verdi, (and Bettini the tenor, if he is living) could know how much noble pleasure and happiness they gave me, and how deeply I always remember them and thank them to this day. For theatricals in literature and doubtless upon me personally, including opera, have been of course serious factors. (The experts and musicians of my present friends claim that the new Wagner and his pieces belong far more truly to me, and I to them, likely. But I was fed and bred under the Italian dispensation, and absorb'd it, and doubtless show it.)

As a young fellow, when possible I always studied a play or libretto quite carefully over, by myself, (sometimes twice through) before

seeing it on the stage; read it the day or two days before. Tried both ways--not reading some beforehand; but I found I gain'd most by getting that sort of mastery first, if the piece had depth. (Surface effects and glitter were much less thought of, I am sure, those times.) There were many fine old plays, neither tragedies nor comedies--the names of them quite unknown to to-day's current audiences. "All is not Gold that Glitters," in which Charlotte Cushman had a superbly enacted part, was of that kind. C. C., who revel'd in them, was great in such pieces; I think better than in the heavy popular roles.

We had some fine music those days. We had the English opera of "Cinderella" (with Henry Placide as the pompous old father, an unsurpassable bit of comedy and music.) We had *Bombastes Furioso*. Must have been in 1844 (or '5) I saw Charles Kean and Mrs. Kean (Ellen Tree)--saw them in the Park in Shakspeare's "King John." He, of course, was the chief character. She play'd Queen Constance. Tom Hamblin was Faulconbridge, and probably the best ever on the stage. It was an immense show-piece, too; lots of grand set scenes and fine armor-suits and all kinds of appointments imported from London (where it had been first render'd.) The large brass bands--the three or four hundred "supes"--the interviews between the French and English armies--the talk with Hubert (and the hot irons) the delicious acting of Prince Arthur (Mrs. Richardson, I think)--and all the fine blare and court pomp--I remember to this hour. The death-scene of the King in the orchard of Swinstead Abbey, was very effective. Kean rush'd in,

gray-pale and yellow, and threw himself on a lounge in the open. His pangs were horribly realistic. (He must have taken lessons in some hospital.)

Fanny Kemble play'd to wonderful effect in such pieces as "Fazio, or the Italian wife." The turning-point was jealousy. It was a rapid-running, yet heavy-timber'd, tremendous wrenching, passionate play. Such old pieces always seem'd to me built like an ancient ship of the line, solid and lock'd from keel up--oak and metal and knots. One of the finest characters was a great court lady, Aldabella, enacted by Mrs. Sharpe. O how it all entranced us, and knock'd us about, as the scenes swept on like a cyclone!

Saw Hackett at the old Park many times, and remember him well. His renderings were first-rate in everything. He inaugurated the true "Rip Van Winkle," and look'd and acted and dialogued it to perfection (he was of Dutch breed, and brought up among old Holland descendants in Kings and Queens counties, Long Island.) The play and the acting of it have been adjusted to please popular audiences since; but there was in that original performance certainly something of a far higher order, more art, more reality, more resemblance, a bit of fine pathos, a lofty brogue, beyond anything afterward.

One of my big treats was the rendering at the old Park of Shakspeare's "Tempest" in musical version. There was a very fine instrumental band, not numerous, but with a capital leader. Mrs. Austin was the Ariel,

and Peter Richings the Caliban; both excellent. The drunken song of the latter has probably been never equal'd. The perfect actor Clarke (old Clarke) was Prospero.

Yes; there were in New York and Brooklyn some fine non-technical singing performances, concerts, such as the Hutchinson band, three brothers, and the sister, the red-cheek'd New England carnation, sweet Abby; sometimes plaintive and balladic--sometimes anti-slavery, anti-calomel, and comic. There were concerts by Templeton, Russell, Dempster, the old Alleghanian band, and many others. Then we had lots of "negro minstrels," with capital character songs and voices. I often saw Rice the original "Jim Crow" at the old Park Theatre filling up the gap in some short bill--and the wild chants and dances were admirable--probably ahead of anything since. Every theatre had some superior voice, and it was common to give a favorite song between the acts. "The Sea" at the bijou Olympic, (Broadway near Grand,) was always welcome from a little Englishman named Edwin, a good balladist. At the Bowery the loves of "Sweet William,"

"When on the Downs the fleet was moor'd,"

always bro't an encore, and sometimes a treble.

I remember Jenny Lind and heard her (1850 I think) several times. She had the most brilliant, captivating, popular musical style and expression of any one known; (the canary, and several other sweet

birds are wondrous fine--but there is something in song that goes deeper--isn't there?)

The great "Egyptian Collection" was well up in Broadway, and I got quite acquainted with Dr. Abbott, the proprietor--paid many visits there, and had long talks with him, in connection with my readings of many books and reports on Egypt--its antiquities, history, and how things and the scenes really look, and what the old relics stand for, as near as we can now get. (Dr. A. was an Englishman of say 54--had been settled in Cairo as physician for 25 years, and all that time was collecting these relics, and sparing no time or money seeking and getting them. By advice and for a change of base for himself, he brought the collection to America. But the whole enterprise was a fearful disappointment, in the pay and commercial part.) As said, I went to the Egyptian Museum many many times; sometimes had it all to myself--delved at the formidable catalogue--and on several occasions had the invaluable personal talk, correction, illustration and guidance of Dr. A. himself. He was very kind and helpful to me in those studies and examinations; once, by appointment, he appear'd in full and exact Turkish (Cairo) costume, which long usage there had made habitual to him.

One of the choice places of New York to me then was the "Phrenological Cabinet" of Fowler & Wells, Nassau street near Beekman. Here were all the busts, examples, curios and books of that study obtainable. I went there often, and once for myself had a very elaborate and leisurely

examination and "chart of bumps" written out (I have it yet,) by Nelson Fowler (or was it Sizer?) there.

And who remembers the renown'd New York "Tabernacle" of those days "before the war"? It was on the east side of Broadway, near Pearl street--was a great turtle-shaped hall, and you had to walk back from the street entrance thro' a long wide corridor to get to it--was very strong--had an immense gallery--altogether held three or four thousand people. Here the huge annual conventions of the windy and cyclonic "reformatory societies" of those times were held--especially the tumultuous Anti-Slavery ones. I remember hearing Wendell Phillips, Emerson, Cassius Clay, John P. Hale, Beecher, Fred Douglas, the Burleighs, Garrison, and others. Sometimes the Hutchinsons would sing--very fine. Sometimes there were angry rows. A chap named Isaiah Rhynders, a fierce politician of those days, with a band of robust supporters, would attempt to contradict the speakers and break up the meetings. But the Anti-Slavery, and Quaker, and Temperance, and Missionary and other conventicles and speakers were tough, tough, and always maintained their ground, and carried out their programs fully. I went frequently to these meetings, May after May--learn'd much from them--was sure to be on hand when J. P. Hale or Cash Clay made speeches.

There were also the smaller and handsome halls of the Historical and Athensum Societies up on Broadway. I very well remember W.C. Bryant lecturing on Homoeopathy in one of them, and attending two or three

addresses by R.W. Emerson in the other.

There was a series of plays and dramatic genre characters by a gentleman bill'd as Ranger--very fine, better than merely technical, full of exquisite shades, like the light touches of the violin in the hands of a master. There was the actor Anderson, who brought us Gerald Griffin's "Gysippus," and play'd it to admiration. Among the actors of those times I recall: Cooper, Wallack, Tom Hamblin, Adams (several), Old Gates, Scott, Wm. Sefton, John Sefton, Geo. Jones, Mitchell, Seguin, Old Clarke, Richings, Fisher, H. Placide, T. Placide, Thorne, Ingersoll, Gale (Mazeppa) Edwin, Horncastle. Some of the women hastily remember'd were: Mrs. Vernon, Mrs. Pritchard, Mrs. McClure, Mary Taylor, Clara Fisher, Mrs. Richardson, Mrs. Flynn. Then the singers, English, Italian and other: Mrs. Wood, Mrs. Seguin, Mrs. Austin, Grisi, La Grange, Steffanone, Bosio, Truffi, Parodi, Vestvali, Bertucca, Jenny Lind, Gazzaniga, Laborde. And the opera men: Bettini, Badiali, Marini, Mario, Brignoli, Amodio, Beneventano, and many, many others whose names I do not at this moment recall.

In another paper I have described the elder Booth, and the Bowery Theatre of those times. Afterward there was the Chatham. The elder Thorne, Mrs. Thorne, William and John Sefton, Kirby, Brougham, and sometimes Edwin Forrest himself play'd there. I remember them all, and many more, and especially the fine theatre on Broadway near Pearl, in 1855 and '6.

There were very good circus performances, or horsemanship, in New York and Brooklyn. Every winter in the first-named city, a regular place in the Bowery, nearly opposite the old theatre; fine animals and fine riding, which I often witness'd. (Remember seeing near here, a young, fierce, splendid lion, presented by an African Barbary Sultan to President Andrew Jackson. The gift comprised also a lot of jewels, a fine steel sword, and an Arab stallion; and the lion was made over to a show-man.)

If it is worth while I might add that there was a small but well-appointed amateur-theatre up Broadway, with the usual stage, orchestra, pit, boxes, &c., and that I was myself a member for some time, and acted parts in it several times--"second parts" as they were call'd. Perhaps it too was a lesson, or help'd that way; at any rate it was full of fun and enjoyment.

And so let us turn off the gas. Out in the brilliancy of the foot-lights--filling the attention of perhaps a crowded audience, and making many a breath and pulse swell and rise--O so much passion and imparted life!--over and over again, the season through--walking, gesticulating, singing, reciting his or her part--But then sooner or later inevitably wending to the flies or exit door--vanishing to sight and ear--and never materializing on this earth's stage again!

SOME PERSONAL AND OLD-AGE JOTTINGS

Anything like unmitigated acceptance of my "Leaves of Grass" book, and heart-felt response to it, in a popular however faint degree, bubbled forth as a fresh spring from the ground in England in 1876. The time was a critical and turning point in my personal and literary life. Let me revert to my memorandum book, Camden, New Jersey, that year, fill'd with addresses, receipts, purchases, &c., of the two volumes pub'd then by myself--the "Leaves," and the "Two Rivulets"--some home customers, for them, but mostly from the British Islands. I was seriously paralyzed from the Secession war, poor, in debt, was expecting death, (the doctors put four chances out of five against me,)--and I had the books printed during the lingering interim to occupy the tediousness of glum days and nights. Curiously, the sale abroad proved prompt, and what one might call copious: the names came in lists and the money with them, by foreign mail. The price was \$10 a set. Both the cash and the emotional cheer were deep medicines; many paid double or treble price, (Tennyson and Ruskin did,) and many sent kind and eulogistic letters; ladies, clergymen, social leaders, persons of rank, and high officials. Those blessed gales from the British Islands probably (certainly) saved me. Here are some of the names, for I w'd like to preserve them: Wm. M. and D.G. Rossetti, Lord Houghton, Edwd. Dowden, Mrs. Anne Gilchrist, Keningale Cook, Edwd. Carpenter, Therese Simpson, Rob't Buchanan, Alfred Tennyson, John Ruskin, C.G. Gates, E.T. Wilkinson, T.L. Warren, C.W. Reynell, W.B. Scott, A.G. Dew Smith, E.W. Gosse, T.W. Rolleston, Geo. Wallis, Rafe

Leicester, Thos. Dixon, N. MacColl, Mrs. Matthews, R. Hannah, Geo. Saintsbury, R.S. Watson, Godfrey and Vernon Lushington, G.H. Lewes, G.H. Boughton, Geo. Fraser, W.T. Arnold, A. Ireland, Mrs. M. Taylor, M.D. Conway, Benj. Eyre, E. Dannreather, Rev. T.E. Brown, C.W. Sheppard, E.J.A. Balfour, P.B. Marston, A.C. De Burgh, J.H. McCarthy, J.H. Ingram, Rev. R.P. Graves, Lady Mount-temple, F.S. Ellis, W. Brockie, Rev. A.B. Grosart, Lady Hardy, Hubert Herkomer, Francis Hueffer, H.G. Dakyns, R.L. Nettleship, W.J. Stillman, Miss Blind, Madox Brown, H.R. Ricardo, Messrs. O'Grady and Tyrrel; and many, many more.

Severely scann'd, it was perhaps no very great or vehement success; but the tide had palpably shifted at any rate, and the sluices were turn'd into my own veins and pockets. That emotional, audacious, open-handed, friendly-mouth'd just-opportune English action, I say, pluck'd me like a brand from the burning, and gave me life again, to finish my book, since ab't completed. I do not forget it, and shall not; and if I ever have a biographer I charge him to put it in the narrative. I have had the noblest friends and backers in America; Wm. O'Connor, Dr. R.M. Bucke, John Burroughs, Geo.W. Childs, good ones in Boston, and Carnegie and R.G. Ingersoll in New York; and yet perhaps the tenderest and gratefulest breath of my heart has gone, and ever goes, over the sea-gales across the big pond.

About myself at present. I will soon enter upon my 73d year, if I live--have pass'd an active life, as country school-teacher, gardener,

printer, carpenter, author and journalist, domicil'd in nearly all the United States and principal cities, North and South--went to the front (moving about and occupied as army nurse and missionary) during the secession war, 1861 to '65, and in the Virginia hospitals and after the battles of that time, tending the Northern and Southern wounded alike--work'd down South and in Washington city arduously three years--contracted the paralysis which I have suffer'd ever since--and now live in a little cottage of my own, near the Delaware in New Jersey. My chief book, unrhym'd and unmetrical (it has taken thirty years, peace and war, "a borning") has its aim, as once said, "to utter the same old human critter--but now in Democratic American modern and scientific conditions." Then I have publish'd two prose works, "Specimen Days," and a late one, "November Boughs." (A little volume, "Good-Bye my Fancy," is soon to be out, wh' will finish the matter.) I do not propose here to enter the much-fought field of the literary criticism of any of those works.

But for a few portraiture or descriptive bits. To-day in the upper story of a little wooden house of two stories near the Delaware river, east shore, sixty miles up from the sea, is a rather large 20-by-20 low ceiling'd room something like a big old ship's cabin. The floor, three quarters of it with an ingrain carpet, is half cover'd by a deep litter of books, papers, magazines, thrown-down letters and circulars, rejected manuscripts, memoranda, bits of light or strong twine, a bundle to be "express'd," and two or three venerable scrap books. In the room stand two large tables (one of ancient St. Domingo mahogany

with immense leaves) cover'd by a jumble of more papers, a varied and copious array of writing materials, several glass and china vessels or jars, some with cologne-water, others with real honey, granulated sugar, a large bunch of beautiful fresh yellow chrysanthemums, some letters and envelopt papers ready for the post office, many photographs, and a hundred indescribable things besides. There are all around many books, some quite handsome editions, some half cover'd by dust, some within reach, evidently used, (good-sized print, no type less than long primer,) some maps, the Bible, (the strong cheap edition of the English crown,) Homer, Shakspeare, Walter Scott, Emerson, Ticknor's "Spanish Literature," John Carlyle's Dante, Felton's "Greece," George Sand's "Consuelo," a very choice little Epictetus, some novels, the latest foreign and American monthlies, quarterlies, and so on. There being quite a strew of printer's proofs and slips, and the daily papers, the place with its quaint old fashion'd calmness has also a smack of something alert and of current work. There are several trunks and depositaries back'd up at the walls; (one well-bound and big box came by express lately from Washington city, after storage there for nearly twenty years.) Indeed the whole room is a sort of result and storage collection of my own past life. I have here various editions of my own writings, and sell them upon request; one is a big volume of complete poems and prose, 1000 pages, autograph, essays, speeches, portraits from life, &c. Another is a little "Leaves of Grass," latest date, six portraits, morocco bound, in pocket-book form.

Fortunately the apartment is quite roomy. There are three windows in front. At one side is the stove, with a cheerful fire of oak wood, near by a good supply of fresh sticks, whose faint aroma is plain. On another side is the bed with white coverlid and woollen blankets. Toward the windows is a huge arm-chair, (a Christmas present from Thomas Donaldson's young daughter and son, Philadelphia) timber'd as by some stout ship's spars, yellow polish'd, ample, with rattan-woven seat and back, and over the latter a great wide wolf-skin of hairy black and silver, spread to guard against cold and draught. A time-worn look and scent of old oak attach both to the chair and the person occupying it.

But probably (even at the charge of parrot talk) I can give no more authentic brief sketch than "from an old remembrance copy," where I have lately put myself on record as follows: Was born May 31, 1819, in my father's farm-house, at West Hills, L.I., New York State. My parents' folks mostly farmers and sailors--on my father's side, of English--on my mother's (Van Velsor's), from Hollandic immigration. There was, first and last, a large family of children; (I was the second.) We moved to Brooklyn while I was still a little one in frocks--and there in B. I grew up out of frocks--then as child and boy went to the public schools--then to work in a printing office. When only sixteen or seventeen years old, and for three years afterward, I went to teaching country schools down in Queens and Suffolk counties, Long Island, and "boarded round." Then, returning to New York, work'd as printer and writer, (with an occasional shy at "poetry.")

1848-'9.--About this time--after ten or twelve years of experiences and work and lots of fun in New York and Brooklyn--went off on a leisurely journey and working expedition (my brother Jeff with me) through all the Middle States, and down the Ohio and Mississippi rivers. Lived a while in New Orleans, and work'd there. (Have lived quite a good deal in the Southern States.) After a time, plodded back northward, up the Mississippi, the Missouri, &c., and around to, and by way of, the great lakes, Michigan, Huron and Erie, to Niagara Falls and Lower Canada--finally returning through Central New York, and down the Hudson. 1852-'54--Occupied in house-building in Brooklyn. (For a little while of the first part of that time in printing a daily and weekly paper.)

1855.--Lost my dear father this year by death.... Commenced putting "Leaves of Grass" to press, for good--after many MSS. doings and undoings--(I had great trouble in leaving out the stock "poetical" touches--but succeeded at last.) The book has since had some eight hitches or stages of growth, with one annex, (and another to come out in 1891, which will complete it.)

1862.--In December of this year went down to the field of war in Virginia. My brother George reported badly wounded in the Fredericksburg fight. (For 1863 and '64, see "Specimen Days.") 1865 to '71--Had a place as clerk (till well on in '73) in the Attorney.

General's Office, Washington. (New York and Brooklyn seem more like home, as I was born near, and brought up in them, and lived, man and boy, for 30 years. But I lived some years in Washington, and have visited, and partially lived, in most of the Western and Eastern cities.)

1873.--This year lost, by death, my dear dear mother--and, just before, my sister Martha--the two best and sweetest women I have ever seen or known, or ever expect to see. Same year, February, a sudden climax and prostration from paralysis. Had been simmering inside for several years; broke out during those times temporarily, and then went over. But now a serious attack, beyond cure. Dr. Drinkard, my Washington physician, (and a first-rate one,) said it was the result of too extreme bodily and emotional strain continued at Washington and "down in front," in 1863, '4 and '5. I doubt if a heartier, stronger, healthier physique, more balanced upon itself, or more unconscious, more sound, ever lived, from 1835 to '72. My greatest call (Quaker) to go around and do what I could there in those war-scenes where I had fallen, among the sick and wounded, was, that I seem'd to be so strong and well. (I consider'd myself invulnerable.) But this last attack shatter'd me completely. Quit work at Washington, and moved to Camden, New Jersey--where I have lived since, receiving many buffets and some precious caresses--and now write these lines. Since then, (1874-'91) a long stretch of illness, or half-illness, with occasional lulls. During these latter, have revised and printed over all my books--bro't out "November Boughs"--and at intervals leisurely and

exploringly travel'd to the Prairie States, the Rocky Mountains,
Canada, to New York, to my birthplace in Long Island, and to Boston.
But physical disability and the war-paralysis above alluded to to
have settled upon me more and more the last year or so. Am now (1891)
domicil'd, and have been for some years, in this little old cottage
and lot in Mickle street, Camden, with a house-keeper and man nurse.
Bodily I am completely disabled, but still write for publication. I
keep generally buoyant spirits, write often as there comes any lull in
physical sufferings, get in the sun and down to the river whenever I
can, retain fair appetite, assimilation and digestion, sensibilities
acute as ever, the strength and volition of my right arm good,
eyesight dimming, but brain normal, and retain my heart's and soul's
unmitigated faith not only in their own original literary plans, but
in the essential bulk of American humanity east and west, north and
south, city and country, through thick and thin, to the last. Nor must
I forget, in conclusion, a special, prayerful, thankful God's blessing
to my dear firm friends and personal helpers, men and women, home and
foreign, old and young.

OUT IN THE OPEN AGAIN

From the Camden Post, April 16, '91.

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. He has had the worst winter yet, mainly from grippe and gastric troubles, and threaten'd blindness; but keeps good spirits, and has a new little forthcoming book in the printer's hands.

AMERICA'S BULK AVERAGE

If I were ask'd persona to specify the one point of America's people on which I mainly rely, I should say the final average or bulk quality of the whole.

Happy indeed w'd I consider myself to give a fair reflection and representation of even a portion of shows, questions, humanity, events, unfoldings, thoughts, &c. &c., my age in these States.

The great social, political, historic function of my time has been of course the attempted secession war.

And was there not something grand, and an inside proof of perennial grandeur, in that war! We talk of our age's and the States' materialism--and it is too true. But how amid the whole sordidness--the entire devotion of America, at any price, to pecuniary success, merchandise--disregarding all but business and profit--this war for a bare idea and abstraction--a mere, at bottom, heroic dream and reminiscence--burst forth in its great devouring flame and conflagration quickly and fiercely spreading and raging, and enveloping all, defining in two conflicting ideas--first the Union cause--second the other, a strange deadly interrogation point, hard to define--Can we not now safely confess it?--with magnificent rays, streaks of noblest heroism, fortitude, perseverance, and even conscientiousness, through its pervadingly malignant darkness. What an

area and rounded field, upon the whole--the spirit, arrogance, grim tenacity of the South--the long stretches of murky gloom--the general National Will below and behind and comprehending all--not once really wavering, not a day, not an hour--What could be, or even can be, grander?

As in that war, its four years--as through the whole history and development of the New World--these States through all trials, processes, eruptions, deepest dilemmas, (often straining, tugging at society's heart-strings, as if some divine curiosity would find out how much this democracy could stand,) have so far finally and for more than a century best justified themselves by the average impalpable quality and personality of the bulk, the People en masse.... I am not sure but my main and chief however indefinite claim for any page of mine w'd be its derivation, or seeking to derive itself, f'm that average quality of the American bulk, the people, and getting back to it again.

LAST SAVED ITEMS

I'm a vast batch left to oblivion.

In its highest aspect, and striking its grandest average, essential Poetry expresses and goes along with essential Religion--has been and is more the adjunct, and more serviceable to that true religion (for of course there is a false one and plenty of it) than all the priests and creeds and churches that now exist or have ever existed--even while the temporary prevalent theory and practice of poetry is merely one-side and ornamental and dainty--a love-sigh, a bit of jewelry, a feudal conceit, an ingenious tale or intellectual finesse, adjusted to the low taste and calibre that will always sufficiently generally prevail--(ranges of stairs necessary to ascend the higher.)

The sectarian, church and doctrinal, follies, crimes, fanaticisms, aggregate and individual, so rife all thro' history, are proofs of the radicalness and universality of the indestructible element of humanity's Religion, just as much as any, and are the other side of it. Just as disease proves health, and is the other side of it...

The philosophy of Greece taught normality and the beauty of life. Christianity teaches how to endure illness and death. I have wonder'd whether a third philosophy fusing both, and doing full justice to both, might not be outlined.

It will not be enough to say that no Nation ever achiev'd

materialistic, political and money-making successes, with general physical comfort, as fully as the United States of America are to-day achieving them. I know very well that those are the indispensable foundations--the sine qua non of moral and heroic (poetic) fruitions to come. For if those pre-successes were all--if they ended at that--if nothing more were yielded than so far appears--a gross materialistic prosperity only--America, tried by subtlest tests, were a failure--has not advanced the standard of humanity a bit further than other nations. Or, in plain terms, has but inherited and enjoy'd the results of ordinary claims and preceding ages.

Nature seem'd to use me a long while--myself all well, able, strong and happy--to portray power, freedom, health. But after a while she seems to fancy, may-be I can see and understand it all better by being deprived of most of those.

How difficult it is to add anything more to literature--and how unsatisfactory for any earnest spirit to serve merely the amusement of the multitude! (It even seems to me, said H. Heine, more invigorating to accomplish something bad than something empty.)

The Highest said: Don't let us begin so low--isn't our range too coarse--too gross?... The Soul answer'd: No, not when we consider what it is all for--the end involved in Time and Space,

Essentially my own printed records, all my volumes, are doubtless but

off-hand utterances fm Personality spontaneous, following implicitly the inscrutable command, dominated by that Personality, vaguely even if decidedly, and with little or nothing of plan, art, erudition, &c.

If I have chosen to hold the reins, the mastery, it has mainly been to give the way, the power, the road, to the invisible steeds. (I wanted to see how a Person of America, the last half of the 19th century, w'd appear, but quite freely and fairly in honest type.)

Haven't I given specimen clues, if no more? At any rate I have written enough to weary myself--and I will dispatch it to the printers, and cease. But how much--how many topics, of the greatest point and cogency, I am leaving untouched!

WALT WHITMAN'S LAST [49]

Good-Bye my Fancy.--concluding Annex to Leaves of Grass.

"The Highest said: Don't let us begin so low--isn't our range too coarse--too gross?... The Soul answer'd: No, not when we consider what it is all for--the end involved in Time and Space."--An item from last page of "Good-Bye."

H. Heine's first principle of criticising a book was, What motive is the author trying to carry out, or express or accomplish? and the second, Has he achiev'd it?

The theory of my Leaves of Grass as a composition of verses has been from first to last, (if I am to give impromptu a hint of the spinal marrow of the business, and sign it with my name,) to thoroughly possess the mind, memory, cognizance of the author himself, with everything beforehand--a full armory of concrete actualities, observations, humanity, past poems, ballads, facts, technique, war and peace, politics, North and South, East and West, nothing too large or too small, the sciences as far as possible--and above all America and the present--after and out of which the subject of the poem, long or short, has been invariably turned over to his Emotionality, even Personality, to be shaped thence; and emerges strictly therefrom, with

all its merits and demerits on its head. Every page of my poetic or attempt at poetic utterance therefore smacks of the living physical identity, date, environment, individuality, probably beyond anything known, and in style often offensive to the conventions.

This new last cluster, Good-By my Fancy follows suit, and yet with a difference. The clef is here changed to its lowest, and the little book is a lot of tremolos about old age, death, and faith. The physical just lingers, but almost vanishes. The book is garrulous, irascible (like old Lear) and has various breaks and even tricks to avoid monotony. It will have to be ciphered and ciphered out long--and is probably in some respects the most curious part of its author's baffling works.

Walt Whitman.

Note:

[49] Published in Lippincott's Magazine, August, 1891, with the following note added by the editor of the magazine: "With Good-Bye my Fancy, Walt Whitman has rounded out his life-work. This book is his last message, and of course a great deal will be said about it by critics all over the world, both in praise and dispraise; but probably nothing that the critics will say will be as interesting as this characteristic utterance upon the book by the poet himself. It is the

subjective view as opposed to the objective views of the critics.
Briefly, Whitman gives, as he puts it, 'a hint of the spinal marrow
of the business,' not only of Good-Bye my Fancy, but also of the
Leaves of Grass

"It was only after considerable persuasion on the editor's part that
Mr. Whitman consented to write the above. As a concise explanation
of the poet's life-work it must have great value to his readers and
admirers. After the critics 'have ciphered and ciphered out long,'
they will probably have nothing better to say."