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Every evening I read Walt Whitman papers, every evening
G.P.O. extracted a promise from him he would not undertake any more letters
until he had finished the New York edition of the First Book. Aug. - Sep. 1919.
He must have written her for the promise given in a previous section (Phila^a)
has been found among his papers well many notes. It is written in a good with very few corrections.
WALT WHITMAN

An Anniversary Address with personal Reminiscences.

(Written in Jersey 1919 - many incomplete notes at end). H.C.

(Next page omitted to Miss S.)

Not long after removing to Philadelphia a telegram came from my friend Dr. Maurice Bucke of London, Ont. "Please see Walt and let me know how he is" - to which I had to answer "Who is Walt and where does he live?" It was very stupid of me as I should have remembered that a few years before when Dr. Bucke had been a guest at one of our Club dinners in Montreal he had startled us into doubts of his sanity by extravagant praises of one Walt Whitman, a new seer of a new era, whom he classed with our Saviour, Buddha, and Mahomet. Then I remembered, too, to have seen notices of a book he had written about Whitman; but I had no idea where the prophet lived. The next morning I had the answer "Mr. Walter Whitman, 328, Mickle Street, Camden". In the afternoon I crossed the Delaware river ferry and in a "clean, quiet democratic street" I found the little, old-fashioned two-storey frame house. A pleasant middle-aged woman answered the door, to whom I showed Dr. Bucke's telegram. "He will be glad to see you - anyone from Dr. Bucke. Mr. Whitman is better to-day and downstairs". The door opened into what appeared to be a room, but I had no little difficulty at first in getting my bearings. I have seen what the tidy housewife calls a 'clutter', but nothing to compare with the front room, ground floor of no. 328 Mickle Street. At the corner, near the window the head and upper part of a man were visible - everywhere else, covering the floor, the chairs and the table were, to use his own description, "Heaps of books, manuscripts, memoranda, scissorings, proof-sheets, pamphlets, newspapers, old and new magazines, mysterious-looking literary bundles tied up with stout strings". The magazines and newspapers, piled higher than the desk, covered the floor so completely that I had to kick my way by the two sides of the wall of the room to get to the desk. ^{After} After a hearty greeting, I had some difficulty in explaining that I did not come directly from Dr. Bucke, but that he had sent me over from Philadelphia to find out ^{how} he was. There was nothing serious the matter - a transient indisposition which had passed away. With a large frame, and well-shaped, well-poised head, covered with a profusion of snow-white hair, which mingled on the cheeks with a heavy long beard and moustache, Walt Whitman, in his 65th year, was a fine figure of a man who had aged beautifully, or more properly speaking, majestically. The eyebrows were thick and shaggy, and the man seemed lost in a hirsute canopy. The grey eyes had a kindly, sympathetic look; the skin was fresh and clear, wrinkled only on the forehead. The nose was large and straight; the mouth was hidden by the moustache. Though high-pitched, the

Delivered at the School of Art, to Sir Walter Raleigh's Class in English Literature (in 1903. Sunday.)

of Prof. Drufels' room in Santos Resantos.

See also p. 10. W's book.

voice was clear and musical, and ^{the} words uttered slowly in short sentences. Clad in grey homespun, with a large white collar open at the neck, exposing the upper part of his chest - the picture is one now familiar to all in the reproductions of the photographs of "the good grey poet". I could not get much from him about his health. My visit was a surprise, as he had not heard from Dr. Bucke. He soon warmed into praise of his good friend and devoted disciple with whom he had stayed in 1881. The absence of bolts and bars and restraint of all kinds in Dr. Bucke's asylum impressed him deeply. "It is a home", he said "not an asylum". I felt a bit embarrassed, as professional advice seemed superfluous, and our points of contact were few and easily exhausted. I left with the pleasant impression of having seen a splendid old man, and a room the grand disorder of which filled me with envy. My visit was made without any of that preparation - that expectation, upon which Gideon Harvey dwells as influencing so profoundly our feelings. I knew nothing of Walt Whitman and had never read a line of his poems. - a Scythian visitor at Delphi! How different the impression of the initiated! Dr. John Johnston, of Bolton, who visited Whitman in 1890 speaks of "the irresistible magnetism of his sweet aromatic presence, which seemed to exhale sanity, purity and naturalness, and exercised over me an attraction which positively astonished me, producing an exhilaration of mind and soul which no man's presence ever did before. I felt that I was here face to face with the living embodiment of all that was good, noble and lovable in humanity". That evening at the Club after dinner I opened the volume of "Leaves of Grass" for the first time. Whether the meat was too strong, or whether it was the style of cooking - 'twas not for my pampered palate, accustomed to Plato and Shakespeare and Shelley and Keats. This has been a common experience; even Dr. Bucke acknowledged that "for many months I could see absolutely nothing in the book", and would even "throw it down in a sort of rage". Whitman himself has expressed this feeling better than anyone else, speaking of his "strange voice", and acknowledging that critics and lovers of poetry may well be excused the "chilly and unpleasant shudders which will assuredly run through them, to their very blood and bones" when they first read him and exclaim "If this is poetry, where must its foregoers stand?"

After a few days I paid a second visit. He had heard from Dr. Bucke who had also written asking me to look after his old friend in case of illness. There was really nothing to do professionally. In 1873 he had paralysis of the left side, the details of which, with interesting incidents of the illness are given in his "Letters to his Mother" and in "The Diary of an Invalid". Though he recovered and used the left arm and hand freely, the leg of that side remained a little weak, but he did not drag it, like an old paralytic. After a careful examination he seemed pleased that I was able to tell him the machine was in

sentences. Clad in grey homespun with a large white collar
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fairly good condition, considering the length of time it has been in the road. Some months afterwards Dr. Bucke came to Philadelphia, and it was an extraordinary pleasure to see the two men together, and their evident delight in each other's company. Whitman felt that no one understood him so completely, though he did not always agree with him as an interpreter. At this time in his year with long hair and beard turning white, clad in a grey suit and wearing a sombrero, Bucke was an evident 'copy' of the poet; and the two together, strolling in the street, attracted much attention. He was a bit too solicitous about Whitman's health, and my optimism evidently pleased the older man who really had very sound views on the subject. His habits were most abstemious, and the minor ailments were those incident to his age. At this time, of the two men Bucke interested me most.

Though a hero-worshipper, it was a new experience in my life to witness such an absolute idolatry. Where my blurred vision saw only a fine old man, full of common sense and kindly feelings, Bucke felt in the presence of one of the world's great prophets. One evening after dinner at the Rittenhouse Club with Dr. Chapin, Dr. Tyson, Dr. J. K. Mitchell and a few others whom I knew would appreciate him, I drew Bucke on to tell the story of Whitman influence. The fervid disciple, who talks like —? *etc.* in the Pheodius is note often met with in these matter of fact days. It was an experience to hear an elderly man - looking a venerable seer - with absolute abandonment tell how "Leaves of Grass" had meant for him spiritual enlightenment, a new power in life, new joys in a new existence on a plane higher than he had ever hoped to reach. All this with the accompanying physical exaltation expressed by dilated pupils and intensity of utterance that were embarrassing to uninitiated friends. This incident illustrates the type of influence exercised by Whitman on his disciples - a cult of a type such as no other literary man of our generation has been the object. Robert Buchanan too saw in Walt Whitman not a mere maker of poems, but "a personality worthy to rank even above that of Socrates, akin even, though lower and far distant, to that of Him who is considered, and rightly, the first of menin some day not so remote, humanity will wonder that men could dwell side by side with this Colossus and not realize his proportions. This was exactly the mental attitude of Dr. Bucke and others of the cult.

I have notes of visits in and I sometimes went over with Dr. J. K. Mitchell, always taking a greeting of some sort in a book from Dr. Wier Mitchell. One visit I recall with great pleasure - with Dr. (now Sir) Donald MacAlister of Cambridge and two friends who were devoted Whitmanites. The old poet was in fine form and talked with great freedom of his English friend. There was pleasant uniformity in his reception - always the same, cheery and interested, and never seeming to be bored. This occasion remains in my memory as to travellers so distinguished I felt compelled to give my signed copies of the Whitman photographs. Witnessing Bucke's absorbing devotion whenever he

came to Philadelphia, and stimulated by the possession of presentation copies of his works, I gradually came to realize what Whitman's life and message meant to his follower.

In June 1888 began a serious illness. Fortunately Bucke was in Philadelphia at the time attending a conference. He had dined with me at the Rittenhouse Club, and spoke of having seen Whitman the day before, having called at my rooms on his way to Camden, hoping to take me with him. The next day Bucke came in great distress to say that Whitman was seriously ill. We found him in bed, conscious but mentally confused and with the speech slightly blurred and indistinct. There was no fever and the pulse was good. He had had one or possibly two attacks of transient unconsciousness with difficulty in speaking such as we know now are not uncommon with sclerosis of the arteries of the brain. For a week or more the condition looked doubtful, but he gradually improved, and recovered without any permanent paralysis or loss of speech. The full details of this period and Whitman's comment upon my visits - and optimism - may be read in that most extraordinary of all records of an adoring worshipper, Horace and Traubel's "With Walt Whitman in Camden". Nothing could exceed the devotion of Mrs. Davis, his housekeeper, and of his nurse; and of his friends in Camden and Philadelphia.....