

PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS OF WALT. WHITMAN



WHITMAN IN WAR TIMES. Photo by Brady.

By Col. JOHN A. JOYCE.

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FIRST met Walt Whitman in the winter of 1866 at the old Washington House, corner of Pennsylvania Avenue and Third Street, number of "Big Injun" chiefs were holding a reception in the parlors of the hotel, and were dressed out in all the wild fantastic war gear of the plains and mountains of the boundless West.

A notable gathering of private and

dor, love, and truth. As army nurse during the civil war, he was the philanthropist to both blue and gray. Whitman soared away in the sky of truth, far above creeds, fashion, and policy, and while he was dismissed from a clerkship in the Interior Department for writing an "immoral" book, and using blunt language, the Secretary who wreaked a short-lived religious vengeance on the grand old army nurse is forgotten, or only remembered by his bigoted tyranny over a genius in literature.

Whitman's Varied Career.

On Decoration Day, May 30, 1868, at Arlington, Walt Whitman and myself walked across the Aqueduct bridge along the river road on the Virginia side to the National Cemetery and listened to the ceremonies, the first of the memorial held in honor of the patriot dead.

WHITMAN IN HIS LAST DAYS.

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birds made music through the forest aisles.

Half naked colored children and old tottering "uncles" from the Freedman's villages adjacent beset us for pennies in exchange for bunches of daisies and wild flowers, and it was as funny as a circus to see Whitman empty his pocket

the Union dead. In our scramble up the hill Whitman strolled ahead and when I finally caught up with him he was standing under a weeping willow beside a rough headboard, marked "Frank Gordon, Company 'A,' First Georgia," reciting the following verse of poetry:

alist and philosopher, reciting love-lit lines over the remains of Confederate soldiers, and an incident I shall never forget. Life is too short to hate each other, and love is too sweet to barter for vengeance. Whitman's broad, generous nature went out to all mankind like perfume from a field of new mown hay, and over the mouldering remains of a late enemy his noble heart responded to the dictates of charity that still spreads a glow of living light over the pathetic ashes of remembrance.

When we arrived in front of the Arlington mansion the decoration ceremony

death is in a subtle sense a prophecy of spring."

I lay this poetic spray upon the honored grave of my old friend, my dear

WALT WHITMAN.

In youth I knew the grand old man Who lived upon the God-like plan Of doing daily every good To all his human brotherhood. I roamed with him among the hills And heard the music of the rills That echoed back the red-bird's call Where leaped the sparkling waterfall, And giant oaks in rhythmic tune Made music in the leafy June. We talked of flowers and birds and trees While through our locks the balmy breeze

A notable gathering of private and public citizens had assembled to shake the red hand of the noble savage and hear the grunt and chuckle of blaring warriors, who had lifted the scalps of many white settlers and left their lonely cabins in ashes. Senator Henry Wilson, of Massachusetts, introduced me to several noted men—Anson Burlingame, Ben Wade, John A. Blagham, James Buffington, Henry Winter Davis, Charles Sumner, Thaddeus Stevens, and last but not least, Walt Whitman.

To me, Walt Whitman, then only a retired army nurse and Government clerk, seemed the biggest man in the crowd,

Whitman was born in West Hills, N. Y., May 31, 1819, and died in Camden, N. J., March 26, 1892. He worked in a lawyer's and doctor's office after quitting school, afterward taught school, learned the printers' trade, owned newspapers and was editorial writer on the Brooklyn, New York and New Orleans journals.

His first venture in literature was in 1855, when he launched his unorthodox "Leaves of Grass" that has been reprinted and enlarged until it has run into twelve editions.

"Drum Beats," "Autobiography" and

triot dead.

The day was bright and cool, while the waters of the shifting Potomac flashed and twinkled in the sun, as va-grant zephyrs skipped across its placid bosom. The wild flowers peeped from every nook along the roadside, while a sheet of daisies covered the fields and hills like a garb of snow, and flitting

circus to see Whitman empty his pocket of pennies, nickels, dimes and quarters and fling them in the dusty road, while the group of "smoked Yankees" scrambled and tumbled for the filthy lucre.

In climbing through the woods of Arlington we passed through the dilapidated Confederate graveyard just outside the red sandstone wall inclosing

These in their robes of glory,
These in the gloom of defeat—
All with the battle blood gory,
In the dust of Eternity meet.
Under the sod and the dew,
Waiting the judgment day—
Under the roses the Blue,
Under the willow, the Gray.

This to me was a great, generous picture, to behold Walt Whitman, the joy-

ington mansion, the decorations were blue had begun. Gen. N. P. Chipman was chairman of the committee of arrangements, and called the assembly in order. Col. W. T. Collins read General Order No. 1, establishing Decoration Day, signed by Gen. John A. Logan, the national commander of the Grand Army of the Republic. Dr. Byron Sunderland delivered the opening prayer. Gen. James A. Garfield delivered a most eloquent and patriotic oration. Col. J. C. Smith rendered an original poem. Gen. Holbert E. Paine read Lincoln's Gettysburg address, and Dr. C. B. Boynton delivered the benediction at the tomb of

While through our locks the halcyon breeze
Went tripping on with joyous glebe—
The best of every sun and sea,
While wood-symphies with their wistful eyes
Looked out with innocent surprise.
And when we tried their realm to pass
They tangled up with "Leaves of Grass."
While hush! Pass through woods and weeds
Pursued fair variant to the rock,
That still give forth their troubled tune
Amid the flowers of May and June.
Through rustic gods the good gray Seer
Invoked Dame Nature, year by year,
And from her breast their lineage brought
The richest gems of ripest thought,
That down the ages shall endure.
And keep his memory afire and pure.
We saw Defiance's Gypsy-burg address, and Dr. C. B. Boynton delivered the benediction at the tomb of

because his high, broad brow, luminous eyes, shambling, independent gait, and epigrammatic expressions showed a superior soul. He wore long, straggling hair over a massive brow, a kind of Santa Claus that everybody recognized as a friend. He was so mild, simple, and unassuming that he was great, particularly in sympathy for the wounded and oppressed. The brain may be brilliant and lofty, demanding admiration, but it is the true and tender pulsations of the heart that impress mankind and spread the perfume of life, lasting beyond the grave, and growing greener with the lapse of ages.

Whitman had a great heart that ever beat responsive to the cry of the poor and fallen, and his whole life was a sacrifice to duty. While he was not a poet in the rhythmic sense, he was a chunky logic philosopher, sending his broadax of thought through the timbers of literature that still echo in the whispering "Leaves of Grass," independent shots from the soul of can-

magazine articles have sailed on the sea of literature, all bearing the imprint of Whitman's strong, elephantine strides, like his African prototype rushing through the jungles of sophistry, hypocrisy, and tearing away the tangled brush of scholastic philosophy.

I frequently roamed around Washington with Whitman, riding through rain and shine on the old street cars, talking with drivers and conductors and passing early morning and twilight evenings in confab with the common run of human chubs, suckers and sharks, blending our ideals with the web and woof of working life, where truth is mostly found.

The Social Ladder.

The higher you climb the ladder of society the more frigid become the inhabitants and the more disgusted an honest man becomes with pelf and political people who live by a system of financial chicanery. Join parties and combinations, rob according to law, endowing churches, hospitals and libraries, and then go down to an honored grave!

THE STAGE "REUBEN" IS NO MORE

What has become of Reuben? Where are to be seen his lank visage fringed with scrubby beard, his suspenders tied with twine, his carpetack and linen duster?

You loiter along the crowded downtown thoroughfares and watch in vain for the wiry-framed, innocent-eyed figure. Not one of the hurrying throng carries a carpetack. Not one cranes his neck in an effort to read the signs on the "steenth street windows."

Has Reuben been so warned that he will not leave the farm? No; for every incoming train brings Reuben to town.

He comes to give his wife a good time on her semi-annual shopping trip, to attend a "thrashers' convention," or to see about subdividing some acres he used to work near the city limits. He wears a coat that, if not in the latest cut, is at least unobtrusive. He carries a bag that, if guiltless of the labels of the traveled, is the conventional dress-suit case as to shape. He has his Chicago banker and his Chicago lawyer—probably school friends—with

whom he lunches and dines, apparently undisturbed by the stir of lights and music.

But Reuben has vanished, too, from the country station, the shady lanes far from traveled roads, from the farm itself. He has gone and taken his picturesque language with him.

Country fair grounds are crowded as ever, but the talk one hears, while quite as uncivilized, is the barbarity of the pavement and not of the dusty road. Slang, whose picturesqueness depends on a background of alleys and brick walls, seems strangely out of place among the elderberry thickets, blueberry bushes and ragweed.

Reuben no longer chews a bit of timothy, as he leans against a picturesque fence, nor sits aloft like an admiral aboard his flagship as he goes through billows of grain.

Alas, Reuben has indeed left us, to smile only in hollow mockery from the pages of the so-called funny papers, or to appear now and again in dreary travesty upon the vaudeville boards.—Chicago Evening Post.



COL. JOHN A. JOYCE.

the "Unknown." The cannons thundered a national salute and 20,000 people spread flowers over the graves of their sacred dead.

As the golden beams of sunset nestled in the towering tree tops of Arlington, the "Good Gray Poet" and myself sauntered through the woods and by-paths to the historic Long Bridge, and passed over its tottering timbers to Washington, where we bid good-by for the day as the flickering lamps of omnipotence sparkled in their eternal realm.

Words That Live.

Eighty-three years have passed since Whitman was born, yet the words of Bob Ingersoll, ten years ago, over his pulseless clay speak the hope of immortality:

"Over the grave bends Love sobbing, and by her side stands Hope and whispers: 'We shall meet again!' Before all life is death, and after all death is life. The falling leaf touched with the hectic that testifies of autumn's

And mingle with the ocean spray.
A patriot of posterity mold
With heart and soul like virgin gold
He ever soothed the bed of pain
And never worked to great or small;
Who knew no color, race or creed
But put his words in doing dead,
Full knowing well upon this soil
All men are equal with their God.
We often roamed amid the mart
Where men courted with the day and art,
And heard the wrangling voice of gain
Disseminating in the snow and rain
The price of trout, ducks and collars—
All for pence, dimes and dollars.
And then upon the rumbling car
Through street and lane we'd ride star
Until the burning, setting sun
Went down on glorious Washington.
And when the stars with magic light
Blurred the curtains of the night,
Upon some rocky pyramid
We'd listen to the "Lays of—"
While far away amid the hills
The halcyon came and running rills
Would echo back the poet's sigh
That fluted through the evening sky
When Lincoln and her gorgeous train
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