WALT WHITMAN PROPHET AND DEMOCRAT

By CHARLES ZUEBLIN

I t was my misfortune not to become acquainted with the poetry of Walt Whitman until the year of his death, and then to be introduced to it and him by an Englishman at Oxford, who told me he was our greatest American poet. I went to England to study, as I went to Germany, with the idea that Walt Whitman and Richard Wagner were makers of noise. I discovered in Germany that cultivated people preferred Richard Wagner to the Italian composers, and I discovered, when I made the acquaintance of Walt Whitman, that it did not matter so much whether people were cultivated or not from the point of view of Walt Whitman and the larger life. He is our greatest exponent of democracy.

There are three periods in Walt Whitman's life. He served thirty years apprenticeship for life; and then he underwent a transformation that made him a new man, and he had twenty years of productivity; and after that twenty years of quiescence. He was educated in the Brooklyn public schools, and began his career as an office boy, in a lawyer's and then in a doctor's office. Then he became a printer's apprentice, and wrote sentimental bits, as we all have done—and not more meritorious than ours. At eighteen he was teaching school in Long Island. In 1846 he was help reminding you of a great—a greater—prototype, who spent thirty years in preparing for three brief years of life. When you consider the probable effect on the world of living the kind of life that Whitman taught us to live, you can see so many points of contact that you cannot help comparing the preparation of Jesus and the preparation of Whitman—the coarse ascetic and the sensuous Bohemian. Whitman came forth a man preaching a religion. He states it in terms that absolutely fit him:

"I, too, following many and followed by many, inaugurate a religion, I descend into the arena,
Who knows? they may rise from me yet, and soar above everything.
Each is not for its own sake,
I say the whole earth and all the stars in the sky are for religion's sake."

It is a little shocking to have the "barbaric yawp" preaching the tenderest religion. But you must take him as he is if you would understand him.

"Swiftly arose and spread around me the peace and knowledge that pass all the argument of the earth,
And I know that the hand of God is the promise of my own,
And I know that the spirit of God is the brother of my own,
And that all the men ever born are also my brothers, and the women my sisters, and lovers,
And that a kelson of the creation is love,
And limitless are leaves still or drooping in the fields,
And brown ants in the little wells beneath them,"

For several years after his return to Brooklyn we find him working as a carpenter—a significant point—and also writing, speech-making, preaching. In 1855 the first edition of "Leaves of Grass" appeared, the same year his father died. When you go to "Leaves of Grass," you do not find a book, you find a man revealed. "A feeling or ambition to articulate and faithfully express in literary or poetic form, and uncompromisingly, my own physical, emotional, moral, intellectual, and aesthetic Personality, in the midst of, and tallying, the momentous spirit and facts of its immediate days, and of current America—and to exploit that Personality, in a far more candid and comprehensive sense than any hitherto poem or book."

If you are perfectly in tune with the universe, if you are a conscious participant in all elements of the cosmos, why should you apologise, why should you be called egotistical? The explanation of all this is that Whitman was a pantheist. All things were one to Whitman. Nature was the first of the elements which gave Whitman that consciousness. Thoreau was a nature-lover, but Whitman was more than that: he was nature. He saw and felt no distinctions. Here is the profoundest expression of the truth of evolution of which I know:

"I am an acme of things accomplished, and I am an encloser of things to be. My feet strike an apex of the apices of the stairs, On every step bunches of ages, and larger bunches between the steps. All below duly travell'd, and still I mount and mount. Rise after rise bow the phantoms behind me. Afar down I see the huge first Nothing, I know I was even there."
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And that a kelson of the creation is love,
And limitless are leaves still or drooping in the fields,
And brown ants in the little wells beneath them,
And mossy scabs of the worn fence, heaped stones, elder, mullein and poke weed."

That is a rather large philosophy—from God to poke-weed—and there is nothing left out of it; he dodges no issue and no element of life, here, hitherto, or hereafter.

The keenest joys, the greatest satisfactions, the richest treasures we find in each other. Our mutual intimacies are the coin of the kingdom of life. He is richest who knows best the most people. We all hâve done—and not more meritorious than ours. At eighteen he was teaching school in Long Island. In 1846 he was editor of the Brooklyn Eagle, having climbed the ladder of the newspaper profession. Then he began his Wonderkühne as a journeyman printer. He went to the South and the Far West. In 1848 he was on the editorial staff of the New Orleans Crescent. Here there is a shadow on his life. In New Orleans he had a wife or wives. We do not know anything of the domestic affairs of Whitman except that in later years, in Camden, he was visited by grandchildren. It is only fair to make your own estimate of the meaning of this obscure passage of his life.

But there came within a year a complete transformation of this man, such as takes place in the life of every person who finds himself. Walt Whitman was born again; and no man or woman finds his place in the world until he is born again. (Applause.) You may state this in any terms you like, but if you don't undergo a transformation and come into a consciousness of your relation to the infinite you do not really live. (Applause.) In 1850 he was back in Brooklyn. It was still several years before he produced the volume that was to startle the literary and thinking world. I cannot

*The speeches and the questions and answers reported by Miriam Allen de Ford.
THE QUESTIONS

(Continued from Page 1.)

WALT WHITMAN, PROPHET AND DEMOCRAT.

defiance of the Church to identity with the universe? If you stop to think how you got here, and look at all your antecedents, everything must have been mapped out in order that you should be here today. Such is the conception of this poetic evolutionist. Next to nature, of course, the exposition of pantheism that reveals itself to us is that of man. And what has most embarrassed me is his thought of sex. Whitman always thought of sex not as woman, but as man and woman coincidently.

"Fast-anchored eternal O love! O woman I love! O bride! O wife! more resistless than I can tell, the thought of you? Then separate, as disembodied or another form, Ethereal, the last athletic reality, my consolation. I ascend, I float in the regions of your love. O man, O sharer of my roving life."

His understanding of sex was like the understanding of the Greek sculptor. We do not have the sculpture of ancient days because we do not know the human body so well. Whitman knew the human body, and he knew his own body. "Shall I tell you, reader, to what I attribute my already much restored health? That I have been almost two years, off and on, without drugs and medicines, and daily in the open air. Last summer I found a particularly secluded little dell off one side by my creek, originally a large dug-out mari-pit, now abandoned, filled with bushes, trees, grass a group of willows, a straggling bank, and a spring of delicious water running right through the middle of it, with two or three little cascades. Here I rested every hot day, and follow it up this summer... Never before did I get so close to Nature; never before did I come so close to me... Sweet, sane, still talks of man, it is your thought, your sophistication, your fear, your respectability, that is indecent. There come moods when these clothes of ours are not only too irksome to wear, but are themselves indecent. Perhaps indeed he or she..."
Q: Isn't Whitman's poem, "Captain, My Captain," one of the best in the English language?
A: That is a question of taste; I think it is. (Applause.)

Q: What is the difference between Whitman's idea of pantheism, as expressed to-night, and Haeckel's monism?
A: Whitman felt that we had a responsibility for the carrying on of the universe, and I do not find that in Haeckel.

Q: Did Whitman attempt to live the life he preached or not?
A: He preached what he lived. (Applause.)

Q: Why should we strive for the beautiful and good if God is everything and everything is godly?
A: Why not? The pantheistic idea involves a process. We are moving toward the fulness of life, and it puts a responsibility upon each individual to leave the world a little better than he found it to be (Continued on Page 4.).

Q: Since we do not know the exact circumstances of Whitman's life in New Orleans, should we not call it a blank, instead of a blot, in his life?
A: I did not say it was a blot, but a shadow. It was not a blank. From our present conventional standpoint we must neither gloss over nor glorify it.

Q: You said Whitman was a Socialist but did not belong to the party. I have known other gentlemen who did the same thing—for a reason.
A: I did not say he was a Socialist but did not belong to the party. I have known other gentlemen who did the same thing—for a reason.

Q: What generation guided Whitman before he was born?
A: If you press this poetic language too literally you will lose the meaning. (Mrs. Sargent): Would you give Whitman to youth to read without guidance?
A: No; until young people have nearly finished their adolescent stage, give them a book like Oscar Triggs' Selections from Whitman.

Q: What was Whitman's conception of the origin of God and the universe?
A: I do not know that he anywhere gives that; I do not think he ever tried to, though he does speak of "universal nothingness" and the "lives that are all the same here.

Q: Would Whitman distinguish between God and the world?
A: No, We are living in a world of matter. When we make the transition from matter to water, air or ether, when you see there is no dividing line between organic and inorganic life, it seems easier to conceive of the material and the spiritual as all one. (Applause.)

Q: (Same): Is reality spacial?
A: I do not think the human mind can project itself beyond time and space. (Q. Mr. Mills): Is not Edward Carpenter as far beyond Whitman as the 20th century is beyond the 19th, and would not Whitman in this century be a syndicalist, as Carpenter in this century is a socialist?
A: I do not think Edward Carpenter is in any sense beyond Whitman. As for Whitman's being something today, it is none of our business, and very unprofitable to ask that. He has a universal and timeless philosophy, which we should apply with the same kind of universality that he did to his beginning.

Q: (Mr. Frazier): Isn't it surprising that John Boyle O'Reilly was in favor of raising money to build a cottage in New England for Whitman when none of our business, and very unprofitable to ask that. He has a universal and timeless philosophy, which we should apply with the same kind of universality that he did to his beginning.

A: I think that when you get to the cosmic philosophy of Whitman it is so far beyond such little differences as those of Catholic and Protestant that you lose sight of them altogether.

Q: Did Whitman believe that God was in a state of evolutionary process, and did he think of himself as having come to a completion?
A: Whitman had the advantage of stating his philosophy in poetry, which does not attempt to be precise. But he and other pantheists think that God is coming to what corresponds to a larger conception.

A: Poe is our greatest poet in form, but he had no such things to express as Whitman had. Spinoza and Whitman are very similar, but I see no indication that Whitman had read Spinoza.

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A: No; until young people have nearly finished their adolescent stage, give them a book like Oscar Triggs' Selections from Whitman.
MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE TO BE DISCUSSED HERE.

No man could present more strikingly on our platform "The Ethics of Marriage and Divorce," as Dr. Stanton Colt, of London, Dr. Colt is a man of the finest personal standards, and is at the head of the well-known Ethical Church in his home city. He is a brilliant orator, and has besides a remarkable power of infusing with spiritual truth every topic which he touches. He will be worth coming early to hear.

A BLIND MAN TO ADDRESS THE FOLKS

John D. W. Bodfish, an honor student in the Boston University Law School and a constant attendant at our meetings—though totally blind—is to address us at the Folks gathering downstairs in Kingsley Hall next Sunday afternoon. The 15-minute talks we are getting in the lower hall have so far seemed to be in the line of appreciation of good work now being done by established agencies. We will tell us what the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind is doing to better conditions. Everybody is welcome to this meeting, but if you expect to stay and have supper with us (25 cents) drop a line to Miss Crawford, Room 707, Ford Building before Thursday.

The meetings begin at 3:30.

WHAT FORD HALL MEANS TO ONE OF US

One of the Ford Hall friends who has thought deeply on the great questions of life, rose from a sick bed to hear Professor Zueblin on Walt Whitman. Asked what she thought of the Ford Hall meetings, she said:

"I find it a bit difficult to comply with your request for the expression of the effect upon me during my first attendance at a Ford Hall meeting. There were so many impressions. I am deeply interested in the subject of municipal auditoriums. There ought to be one in every community one central gathering place for all the people that meet every requirement and be free from any objectional bias or associations. In most cities this great need of the people has been left to the haphazard chance of private enterprise. In a few of the more enterprising cities all over the country the municipal authorities have taken the matter in hand, and the result is a number of municipal auditoriums that are a delight to the eye, a pride to the citizens, and a great blessing to every hall that follows. And I am just finding out that this need for an adequate common meeting-place is keenly felt in the rural districts also. This week a letter came to me from my old friend, Mr. C. P. Jameson, who is living in Ashland, N. H., and was formerly a well-known Boston business man. Let me quote him:

"One of the great needs of our small country towns and villages is a social hall or general building, suitable for holding meetings, social, free entertainments.

Mr. Hogan in his chat with Miss Crawford, as set forth on another page, strikes a most interesting note. If men had to qualify for public office by examination as to technical knowledge it would greatly reduce the numbers who clamor for preferment, and also materially assist the voters (on the appointing powers) in making their choice of rival candidates. It is a novel suggestion that provokes good thinking. Strangely enough the day before at the Twentieth Century Club, Mrs. Margaret Orford, the popular author, in favoring a limited woman suffrage argued in favor of a form of examination of all would-be citizens, whereby intelligence rather than a bare literacy should be the requisite demanded. Her discussion of the whole subject of qualifications for citizenship was the ablest I ever heard. In thinking along a similar line, Mr. Hogan can well congratulate himself on finding himself in such good company.

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ing meetings, socials, free entertainments,
lectures, banquets, etc., to be controlled by
a carefully selected local board of trustees.
Such a building would be a great boon for
the young and the old who have little or
no opportunity for social intercourse such
as pertains to our cities."

"The small country church edifice is of
the old stereotyped structure with the fixed
box-like pew, no vestry or basement, and
therefore unfitted for above purposes, and
naturally operated and governed along nar­
row lines."

"Such a building as suggested would tend
to bring the non-church people in touch
with church along social lines, and at the
same time give the church an opportunity
of broadening and brightening herself.
Sometime (who can tell?) some new cult of
worthy and ambitious purpose might be
seeking a 'manger' (when there is no room
at the inn) and such a building would here
serve a unique purpose."

One of our regular attendants, Mr. Maur­
ice Gerlin, is down in Panama at work on
the Canal. He has written a very interesting
letter to the readers of this magazine,
which I am turning over to Editor Dreier
for publication as soon as space permits.
You will not want to miss it. He sees his
paper. And I don't know how long we shall
have to wait to find room for the letter
from Panama. And Editor Dreier has very
little room in which to say his say. What
are we to do about it? More pages mean
more money. Where is it coming from?

Other Meetings
Wells Memorial Institute, 887 Washing­
ton street, Tuesday, Dec. 30, at 8 P. M.
The Attitude of Working People Towards
Socialism, by Fred J. Kneeland and John
Weaver Sherman.
Sunday Commons, Huntington Chambers
Hall, Sunday, Jan. 4, at 3.30 P. M., Dr.
Charles Fleischer, leader.
Public Library, Thursday, Jan. 1, at 8
P. M., Savonarola, by Rev. Thomas I. Gas­
sen, S. J.; Sunday, Jan. 4, at 3.30 P. M.,
How to Listen to Music, by Arthur M.
Curry.

Ford Hall Folks
Edited by Thomas Dreier.
PUBLISHED weekly by the Ford
Hall Associates, whose work
is to create, assemble, and
distribute ideas that will help
men and institutions grow more
helpful in serving society, and which
will promote 'peace on earth, good
will toward men.' It is the official
publication of the Ford Hall Meet­
ings, which are held, under the direc­
tion of George W. Coleman, every
Sunday evening during the months of
October to May, in Ford Hall, Ash­
burton Place, Boston, Massachusetts.
All business communications should be
sent to Miss Mary C. Crawford,
Treasurer. Ford Hall Building, Boston,
and all communications intended for
the editor to The Thomas Dreier Ser­
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FORD HALL FOLKS

A CHAT WITH CHRISTOPHER HOGAN.

By Mary C. Crawford.

Economics should be taught in the public schools, contends Christopher Hogan. I agree with him. It is simply astounding that I, for instance,—who was educated at the Boston Latin School for girls, at Radcliffe College and at the professional school for Social Workers fathered by Harvard College and mothered by Simmons College,—should never have been taught any economics. For a long time I have felt this lack, but I never felt it quite so keenly as during my recent chat with this earnest Ford Hall Socialist, who is a sheet-metal worker by trade.

Possibly, Mr. Hogan has had too much economics—even as I have had too little. Certainly it seemed exceedingly difficult for this Marxian, whose interpretation of current, as well as past, history is the economic one, to establish any kind of satisfactory basis of understanding with a totally unconcerned mind. Mr. Hogan and I cannot be said to have "got on" at all in our chat! But at least I caught some distant glimmer as we talked of his point of view. And I learned several things I did not previously know about Socialists and I. W. W.

For instance, I did not previously know that "the only people who are Socialists are those who accept the platform of the Socialist Labor Party, the oldest Socialist group in this country." For these Socialists are Marxians, it appears, and nence the real Simon Pure article. There is then a Detroit brand of I. W. W. and a Chicago brand. Chicago advocates sabotage in the objectionable and violent manner most of us know to disapprove; Detroit doesn't. From a concealed, but no doubt unintelligent, perusal of the organ of the Socialist Labor Party, the Weekly People, a copy of which Mr. Hogan kindly lent me, I gather that Detroit stands better than Chicago with the Marxian Socialists. I also gathered that Masonry and the Church of Rome are alike regarded as the sworn enemies of true Socialism. It appears that these two bodies, usually antagonistic to each other, have at least this, in common: that they are both "capitalistic." I had not gone far in my chat with Mr. Hogan before I went hopelessly lost. I remarked that candidates, before being elected to Flakes of breast-muscle, plant backbone and neck, flesh not flabby, good-sized arms and legs,

Within there runs blood.
The same old blood! the same red-running blood!

There swells and jets a heart, there all passions, desires, reachings, aspirations,

(Do you think they are not there because they are not express'd in parlor and lecture-rooms?)

This is not only one man, this the father of those who shall be fathers in their

turns.

In him the start of populous states, and rich republics,

Of him countless immortal lives with countless embodiments and enjoyments.

How do you know who shall come from the offspring of his offspring through the centuries?

(Who might you find you have come from yourself, if you could trace back through the centuries?)

Whitman never fails to think of man or woman as potential parent.

"A woman's body at auction,
She too is not only herself, she is the tempting mother of mothers.
She is the bearer of them that shall grow and be mates to the mothers......

If anything is sacred the human body is sacred,

And the glory and sweet of a man is the token of manhood untainted.

And in man or woman a clean, strong, firm-fibred body is more beautiful than the most beautiful face.

When we get to the world of the future,
when people shall get rid of most of their vulgar clothing, we shall change our ideas about modesty. A woman with a beautiful figure does not object to being admired impersonally, if there is nothing implied or involved in it. Whitman viewed this thing impersonally, and there is nothing suggestive about him. Thoreau says, "Of course Whitman can communicate to us no experience, and if we are shocked, whose experience is it we are reminded of?" This in him is not indiscernible, but actual searching after the truth of everything.

"A man is a great thing upon the earth and
through eternity, but every jot of the greatness of man is unfolded out of

There isn't anything but God, according to pantheism.

How do you explain evil in the universe in terms of a righteous God? Whitman has two ideas—at one time he thinks evil is going to be transformed into good, at another he just accepts it all as part of life.

Through me many long dumb voices;
Voices of interminable generations of slaves;
Voices of prostitutes and of deformed persons;
Voices of the sick and the despairing,
and of thieves and dwarfs;
Voices of the cycles of preparation and accretion,
And of the threads that connect the stars——

The other baffling problem of theology is the question of death. Whitman says:

"Praise be the fathomless universe,
For life and joy, and for objects and knowledge curious;
And for love, sweet love,—but praise! O praise and praise,
For the sure-enwinding arms of cool-enfolding Death!
Dark mother, always gliding near, with soft feet.
Have none chanted for thee a chant of fullest welcome?
Then I chant it for thee—I glorify thee above all;
I bring thee a song that when thou must indeed come, come unalteringly."

Whitman is such a democrat that he will even be the friend of death!

Wait Whitman can best be described as a social democrat—not necessarily a Social Democrat. That term in its original meaning accurately describes him. And he would not have his followers Whitmaniacs. He would have them be—lovers.

All good work is done with abandon, with joyousness, with a certain divine carelessnes.

Friends Who Are Coming

Jan. 4—Dr. Stanton Colt of London, "The Ethics of Marriage and Divorce."
Jan. 11—Symposium, "What Is the Matter
men now—and women soon—to study economics. For it the revolving cycles truly and steadily roll'd. In this head the all-baffling brain, Examine these limbs, red, black, or white, they are cunning in tendon and nerve, They shall be stript that you may see them. Exquisite senses, life-lit eyes, bright, volition.

If anything is sacred the human body is sacred, And the glory and sweet of a man is the token of manhood untainted. And in man or woman a strong, firm, fibred body is more beautiful than the most beautiful face.

When we get to the world of the future, where people shall get rid of most of their vulgar clothing, we shall change our ideas about modesty. A woman with a beautiful figure does not object to being admired impersonally, if there is nothing implied or involved in it. Whitman viewed this thing impersonally, and there is nothing suggestive about him. Thoreau says, "Of course Whitman can communicate to us no experience, and if we are shocked, whose experience is it we are reminded of?" This in him is not indifferece, but actual searching after the truth of everything.

"A man is a great thing upon the earth and through eternity, but every jot of the greatness of man is unfolded out of woman. First the man is shaped in the woman, he can then be shaped in himself."

Motherhood was to him the summit of all the significance of sex. When he was serving as a nurse in Washington he brought women to minister to the soldiers, and was particularly anxious that they should all be mothers. Perhaps the very name of pantheism suggests the pantheistic idea of God, but Whitman's terms in which he speaks of God are impersonally, if there is nothing implied or involved in it. Whitman viewed this thing impersonally, and there is nothing suggestive about him. Thoreau says, "Of course Whitman can communicate to us no experience, and if we are shocked, whose experience is it we are reminded of?" This in him is not indifferece, but actual searching after the truth of everything.

And the glory and sweet of a man is the most beautiful face."

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Jan. 4—Dr. Stanton Coit of London, "The Ethics of Marriage and Divorce."
Jan. 11—Symposium, "What Is the Matter With Our Public Schools?" Miss Margaret Slattery of Fitchburg and others to be announced.
Jan. 25—Dr. Albion Woodbury Small of Chicago University.
Feb. 8—Prof. Edward A. Steiner, "The Inter-National Mind and the Inter-Racial Heart."
Feb. 15—Symposium, "Breeding Men." Speakers to be announced.
Feb. 22—Charles Brandon Booth, "The Case for the Prisoner."
March 1—Leisure Willis Sprague of Chicago.
March 8—Symposium, on "Journalism." A. J. Philpott of the Boston Globe and others to be announced.
April 5—Mary Church Terrell, "Uncle Sam and the Sons of Ham."
April 12—Dr. Thomas C. Hall of New York.
April 19—Prof. Walter Rauschenbusch.