

EDITOR'S PREFACE.

AS ONE of Walt Whitman's literary executors there came to me under his will: (1) Letters from himself to his mother written from Washington in war-time (1862-5) and which have lately been published by Small, Maynard & Co. under the title of "The Wound-Dresser." (2) Many hundred letters written by members of the Whitman family to one another, as letters from Mrs. Whitman to W. W., Mrs. Heyde etc., letters from George, Jeff, Mary, Hannah etc. to Mrs. Whitman, and so on. All these letters had been preserved by Mrs. Whitman and upon her death in 1873 passed to Walt Whitman, who, a very sick man at the time and for long afterwards, simply let them lie in old boxes and bundles until at his death they passed to the present editor. (3) Quite a number of books from Whitman's library, many of them annotated by the poet. (4) A great mass of MS., the bulk of which is printed in this volume—a good deal of the rest is of an autobiographical character and is reserved for a new edition of my "Walt Whitman" or to be used in publications supplemental to that volume. (5) The magazine articles and newspaper cuttings enumerated in Part VI. of this volume.

Each of the other two literary executors took under the poet's will the same amount of material as myself, so it will be seen that these MS. remains were quite extensive, and judging by the careless, haphazard manner of their preservation it would seem certain that more must have been lost than were left in existence at the time of the poet's death.

These facts and considerations (when we join to them others equally well known and obvious, as that he knew the Bible, Shakespeare and Homer almost by heart) bring out pretty clearly the extraordinary industry of this man, who has generally been considered as easy-going, careless, idle, even "a loafer," but who must have been, in fact, though almost in secret, one of the most indefatigable workers who ever lived even in America.

For it must be remembered that from childhood he not only had to make his own living by actual daily work ('tending office, typesetting, school teaching, editing newspapers, carpentering, house-building) but all his life, after early youth, he assisted in the maintenance of other members of the family. And besides all this, consider the time taken up by his numerous friendships—his frequent trips into the country, his sails on the bay with pilots, fishermen and others, the many hours spent on the ferry boats and omnibusses, and later his work in the hospitals. But (though it often seems almost or quite miraculous) Walt Whitman always had time and always had money for all his purposes.

The notes printed in this volume came to me in scrapbooks and in bundles. They are all on loose sheets and small pieces of paper of endless sizes, shapes, shades and qualities, (some even written on the back of scraps of wall-paper!). Sometimes they are pasted in a scrapbook but more often stuck in loose, or (as said) tied in bundles. In both the scrapbooks and bundles the MS. notes are mixed with the magazine articles and the newspaper cuttings. These notes, cuttings etc. extend from the forties down to the seventies or eighties—they belong very largely to the fifties.

Every word printed in the body of this book (except in the sixth part, which contains the list of magazine articles and newspaper cuttings and excepting also headings and footnotes) is before me in the handwriting of Walt Whitman. When a passage has been quoted by him the quotation marks are preserved. Any words of explanation added by me are given in footnotes and in a smaller type so that my words can never be confounded with Whitman's.