

Horace Traubel

By Flora MacDonald.

Had I written this article about Horace when I returned from Camden after leaving him in a crypt in Harleigh Cemetery Vault I might have written in a very different strain and I might even have had the temerity to say what several have said that Horace went ahead and burned down the church in New York rather than be taken into it. But I have "cooled down" since then and time has given a less emotionally colored perspective of the last days on earth of Horace Traubel.

I first met Horace in April or May of 1916 at the home of Mr. & Mrs. Irvin Simpson, Toronto through the courtesy of Henry Saunders;—Whitman's most devoted bibliographer. That story I have told in the second number of "The Sunset."

The next time I met him was at the home of Mr. & Mrs. A. E. S. Smythe. It was long after midnight when the party broke up—A party vividly painted on my memory as though it happened yesterday. The charm of the young Irish hostess, the erudition of the host, the adoring attitude of many towards the guest of honor—and he with a quiet chuckle telling stories in answer to questions about many of the Great Literati of the world with whom he had come in contact.

I was especially amused at Horace's swearing. It was the swearing of an innocent little truant school boy—a funny attempt to keep himself down to the "crowd," that was almost a fetish to him.

That's a damned nice cake, or that's a damned pretty picture. No sense or meaning to his swearing. Why Horace I've heard Mark Twain swear and you cannot after that bluff folks with you amateurish damns. Horace walked home with me a distance of half-a-mile but we were three hours getting there for Horace stopped under every real good electric light and read me a clipping or a poem, stopping anon to complement either with an apropos story.

Policemen wandered past us and one even halted but I guess Horace's white hair saved the situation for he only remarked "it's a nice night" instead of "move on."

The next day Horace came to see me, "Now Flora I want you to tell me just how it happened—How you got Walt, how you lined him up with Bon Echo and how you are you anyway." I told the "Walt" story which I have told Mr. Smythe and which I will write some day for "The Sunset."

It was indeed with some diffidence that I claimed such close companionship with Whitman to his acknowledged closest friend, and I would not have been surprised to have seen a skeptical smile or a slight resentment but when I finished Horace said "Flora I love you, you're all right"—(O—No I did not misunderstand. I know all about these universal lovers, having worked