

and able. His friends were many and equally able. In England, where the poet became popular first, such authorities as Mr. Rossetti, Mr. Conway, Mr. Robert Buchanan, Professor Dowden and Mr. Roden Noel, all agree in pronouncing Walt Whitman to be one of the largest and most prominent figures of the time. In America, the poet has been greatly praised by such competent judges as Emerson and John Boyle O'Rielly, while the ablest of the Magazine critics credit him with great originality but deplore his short comings as a metrist. Two brief English criticisms are so pertinent and true that I cannot refrain from benefiting the reader by giving them entire. Mr. W. M. Rossetti says:—"I conceive Walt Whitman to be beyond compare the greatest of American poets, and, indeed, one of the greatest now living in any part of the world. He is just what one would conceive a giant to be, if all the mental faculties and aspirations of such a being were on the same scale with his bodily presence." He describes him as colossal, magnificent, fervid, far-reaching, many-sided, showing the most vivid perceptions of the strongest grasp, attentive to the "volume of things" rather than to their graces, somewhat indifferent yet not wholly insensible to charm of form and subtlety of art." The scale of his intuitions, his sympathies and his observation is so massive and his execution has so wide a sweep that he does not linger over the forms or the finish of his work."

Many years later Mr. Roden Noel wrote: "Whitman springs out of the vast American continent full-charged with all that is special and national in it, in a supereminent degree representative of all that is richest and most fresh (as well as of somewhat unlovely) in the American life which, more fully than any other, embodies the present age's own individuality; yet in that very continent there flutters also some of the feeblest, most contemptible and emasculate of poeticules and critics—faint echoes of an echo, pale, feeble, ineffectual copyists of European literature, with all the native marrow and all the vital sap and savor gone out of them. America is the land of Emerson,

Hawthorne, Thoreau, Longfellow, Lowell; but also of the mocking-bird. He is American democracy incarnate; and however much that leaves to be desired, yet it is great. He is, indeed, more prophet than artist. He very seldom retires to create deliberate imaginative wholes, in whose many diverse forms may be incarnated the truths he sees and utters, the mastering emotions which dominate his soul. You never cease to see . . . man Walt Whitman. But then it is a very noble, and I contend a very poetic personality you see—one in which, as in a magic crystal, all these men and women of the world, all the sights of city and of landscape, find themselves mirrored with most astonishing distinctness." I have before me while I write more than a dozen excerpts from leading men of letters in England and America all in the strain of the two preceding quotations. But enough has already been written to supply a glance at the poet on his way through life, and to give an idea of his poetic writings, and more than that should not be expected in a limited review.

In conclusion a word concerning Whitman's prose. In all his writings there is the rush and crush of the mountain torrent. His eloquence is strong and pungent and he denounces what he thinks wicked, false, mean injurious. Especially in his later prose writings does he express sorrowful recognition and bitter denunciation of what is base, degrading, corrupt in the great American commonwealth. Particularly notable is this in his noble prose manifesto, *Democratic Vistas*, where he insists also in fine vigorous English upon the preeminence of the spiritual and moral in human nature. The subject matter of those paragraphs is not exhausted in what has here been said. Much might well be added, did time and space but offer. As it is I must content myself with the closing declaration, that if I may trust my own poor judgment, Whitman was not only the most original genius America has produced, but one of the most fresh, vigorous, sane and self-sustained writer in the whole lengthy course of English literature.