

## With Horace Traubel at Bon Echo

BY HENRY S. SAUNDERS.

One cannot dip even casually into Whitman literature without meeting the name Horace Traubel. In 1910 when I began to study systematically what had been written about Whitman I soon found that Traubel wrote most intimately and authoritatively about him. There were not even at that date many left who knew Whitman personally; O'Conner passed long ago, in 1889, and Dr. Bucke in 1902. Traubel, Harned, Burroughs and J. H. Johnston were still with us, but Traubel was a more intimate companion in Whitman's later years than any of the others so it was natural that I should be extremely anxious to meet him.

The opportunity came in 1911 at the Fellowship meeting in New York. Horace was there with his good friends Frank and Mildred Bain, Dr. Wiksell and others, and I well remember my interest in meeting him, there was so much I wanted to ask and hear about from this man who had known Whitman for eighteen years and had written so much about him since his death. He was thoroughly posted on all the Whitman literature and activities, news of which I drank in eagerly. One thing I learned immediately was that Trimble of New Zealand had completed a concordance to *Leaves of Grass* several years before, this relieved me of that labor, for I had been working for six months on the same thing and was making good progress.

Horace, (it seemed natural to call him Horace at once,) was ready at any appropriate turn of the conversation to bring in some anecdote or reminiscence of Whitman, and if all of these I have heard from him had been taken down in shorthand they would make a volume of unsurpassed interest for us. I have been with Horace many times since, for a day or a few days at a time and his supply of Whitman stories seemed to be inexhaustible.

The reports of Horace's health during the early part of 1919 were usually not encouraging, though occasionally some note of improvement would reach us. I knew that Mrs. Denison had invited him to Bon Echo, but the problem of getting him there from New York, necessarily a much longer trip than the actual distance, seemed almost unsurmountable in his weakened condition.

So when we started for Bon Echo on August 5th it was not with the expectation of seeing Horace there. He had stood the journey fairly well however and was resting quietly on the hotel verandah drinking in the pure air and the magnificent view of the rock "Old Walt." Standing almost in the centre of the view, which was a fascination to all, is a slender pine tree, the lovely proportions of which arrest the attention even while admiring the great granite pile a quarter of a mile behind it rising several hundred feet perpendicularly out of the water.

Day after day Horace rested there and at times seemed to