

It was not a fussed or fixed-up interior—a writing-table, a few chairs, a couch, a few books and papers.

The "Life and Love of the Insect," by Fabre, was open on a desk near the south window, and an open MacKay's edition of Whitman was on the west window-sill, underneath the picture of a squirrel eating an acorn.

A photo of Whitman was on the right of the plain stone mantle-shelf, and Mona Lisa on the left, with a curled tree branch in the centre.

I counted nine bird's nests here and there.

An enlarged photo of Whitman hung on the wall and also a picture of Whitman's tomb.

Then John Burroughs returned and we talked about Whitman. Several hours passed. I spoke disapprovingly of free "Old Walt" being boxed up in a tomb of his own designing. "That was part of his disease," said Burroughs. I asked why Mona Lisa with Whitman, and he answered, "Why not the Mona Lisa with Whitman?" I suggested that Whitman knew all and knew that it was good, but while the Mona Lisa knew much, she had her doubts. "I'll think about that," said he kindly. We sat down—I asked an occasional question, but John Burroughs talked, and could I have taken down his talk verbatim, and made you feel the atmosphere of the place and the loving affection in his voice, as he talked of Whitman, no finer grand tribute was ever paid by friend to friend; this after Whitman had been dead over a quarter of a century. Once a silence fell—a presence was with us; the spirit of Whitman fraternized mystically and with recognition by us—what a benediction. "I worship Whitman," said Burroughs.

The afternoon had far advanced and train time was near.

John Burroughs walked to the station with me; here are a few snatches of his conversation as we walked. "Whitman used to take a stone the size of an egg and toss it from one hand to the other as we were walking together; when we'd get over in the bush by Whitman Land, he'd often bend down a sapling, letting it lift his Adamic form from the ground; what strength and inspiration I'd gain from seeing him; he was a specimen of physical perfection; clean and sweet."

"He was tender and kind and womanly."

Mrs. Gilchrist would have married him, but he was too indolent; too fond of loafing; inviting his soul; too forgetful; too lazy."

"He was elemental, sweeping as clouds, inclusive as nature."

Was it because Walt Whitman was too forgetful that he did not marry Anne Gilchrist, that marvelously wondrous woman, or was it because he remembered too well and was there,

"A nearer one still

And a dearer one yet

Than all others."

Who knows?

John Burroughs' voice dropped to a saddened key as we passed "The Big House," where for years he had lived with his wife and family; now the house was shut up.