

**WHITMAN
AND TRAUBEL**

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Whitman and Traubel by William English Walling

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WILLIAM ENGLISH WALLING

ALBERT AND CHARLES BONI
NEW YORK : 1916

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FOREWORD

DOES the spirit of Walt Whitman live in any of the writers to-day? Has he a successor? Is that successor his biographer and literary executor, Horace Traubel?

This question is being answered in the affirmative by a rapidly growing number of persons. And those who have become interested in Traubel feel quite as strong an admiration for his work as they do for that of Whitman. Let me quote a typical opinion, that of Eugene V. Debs:

Horace Traubel has the distinctest personality of any man of letters now before the American people. He can be likened to no other author or writer, living or dead. Although a loyal disciple and devotee of Walt Whitman, from whom he undoubtedly caught his earliest and deepest inspiration, he goes far beyond his revered master. He not only brings the old Prophet of Democracy up to date but he traverses untrodden fields and explores new realms in quest of the truth.

Horace Traubel has the clear vision of a prophet, the analytical mind of a philosopher, the daring imagination of a poet, the heroic soul of a martyr, and the unpolluted heart of a child.

WHITMAN AND TRAUBEL

Horace Traubel's work has only recently begun to take book form. Soon after Walt Whitman's death, Traubel, acting as Whitman's literary legatee, began his remarkable biographical study, "Walt Whitman in Camden," but the first volume was not published until 1906, and only three of the volumes out of a probable eight have been issued. For twenty-five years, as editor of *The Conservator*, he has developed Whitman's literary and social ideals, besides engaging in other literary and journalistic activity. But his first prose book, "Chants Communal," was published in 1904, and his "Optimos," which brought together the best of his poems, appeared only in 1911, and selections from his "Collects" in 1914. The larger part of his writings, and some of his best work, is still to be found only in the monthly *Conservator*, which he has now published for twenty-five years. It contains not only those poems that have appeared since the publication of "Optimos," but nearly all of his prose work. In every month's issue besides the "Collect," there are several book reviews, and these are among the most original, sympathetic, and profound of Traubel's writings—among the most remarkable series of book reviews ever published in the English language. The larger part of my quotations are taken from "Collects" and book reviews, and uncollected poems.

An adequate appreciation of Traubel demands

FOREWORD

that the value of the work of Whitman should be brought before the reader's mind, that his genius should be characterized and his limitations pointed out. In discussing Whitman I believe I have avoided covering old ground and have adopted a new standpoint. I have sought not to criticize his poetry but to appreciate his philosophy. In performing this task I have made use of a new source, "With Walt Whitman in Camden," and have had the invaluable assistance of the author of that work—which is probably the most remarkable and valuable human document since Boswell's Johnson.