

ing through the furnace and emerging with the temper of new knowledge and responsibilities.

He soon found the part he was most fitted to play. His brother went into the army, and in three years of desperate fighting rose through almost the whole scale of ranks. Walt Whitman remained in Washington, and devoted himself to the care of the wounded. The pushing hard-headed, florid Yankee editor (one can picture a man of his exuberant character in a newspaper office), became a hospital nurse. For three years he haunted the hospitals and gave all but his life to the sick and wounded. It is impossible to describe his experience with more poignant simplicity than his own jottings in "Specimen Days." He was a man overflowing with animal as well as spiritual vitality. He says, "in my visits to the hospitals I found it was in the simple matter of personal presence, and emanating ordinary cheer and magnetism that I succeeded and helped more than by medical nursing, or delicacies or gifts of money, or anything else. During the war I possessed the perfection of physical health. My habit when practicable was to prepare for starting out on one of those daily or nightly tours of from four to five hours, by fortifying myself with previous rest, the bath, clean clothes, a good meal, and as cheerful an appearance as possible." And at the end of the war he records: "During those three years in hospital, camp or field, I made over six hundred visits or tours, and went as I estimate, counting all, among from eighty thousand to a hundred thousand of the wounded and sick, as sustainer of spirit and body in some degree in time of need. Those three years I consider the greatest privilege and satisfaction (with all their feverish excitement and physical deprivations and lamentable sights), and, of course, the most profound lesson of my life."

Real sympathy and personal magnetism have their strict ac-

counts on the physical side, and within a few years the balance was struck. Walt Whitman found himself paralyzed and helpless. He was without means, it appears, and of no reputation in the world at large. His volume of poetry, "Leaves of Grass," which even then he considered the crowning achievement of his life, had been received with contempt by the public, although a few notable exceptions, Emerson and Burroughs, for instance, had expressed their admiration. The alleged immorality of some of his poems had even cost him his dismissal from a Government billet at the hands of some official ass.

Even these tempests were not able to shake his soul. He was reduced to depend on his friends for his "very sustenance, clothing, shelter, and continuity;" but he was neither embittered nor degraded by the failure of his life's hopes. Still large-minded, wholesome, and cheerful, he looks out, as a spectator only now, on the dramas of man and nature moving round him.

Except for an occasional tour through the States, in which the penniless poet looks out over the state of his country with the air and style of an emperor (he might have said, indeed, "The age is my dominion"), he spent the greater part of his remaining life in country homes, living with simple friends—farmers and naturalists. His notes henceforward are observations of open-air trifles, written by a child of Nature, not a trained naturalist; he "lugs his chair" round from one favourite spot to another, from an oak to a cedar, from a pond side to a little dell beside a creek, where he delights in sun baths and nakedness. And most of all he is stirred by the night sky, and its procession of stars and planets. Ferries and night skies might be described as the two passions of Walt Whitman, for he can never resist pulling out his notebook to record a new sense of joy in the ris-