

We used to catch niggers, and return 'em to their masters, and I had an awful job putting an end to it. But I did it and I will show you a land yet where a patriot can land without being held up and returned to a king, or my name is not UNCLE SAM.

WALT WHITMAN AND THE DEMOCRACY OF THE NEW CENTURY.

Writes Anne Gilchrist in her "Confession of Faith:"

Fifteen years ago, with feelings partly of indifference, partly of antagonism—for I had heard none but ill words of them—I first opened Walt Whitman's poems. But as I read I first became conscious of receiving the most powerful influence that had ever come to me from any source. What was the spell? It was that in them humanity has, in a new sense, found itself, for the first time has dared to accept itself without disparagement, without reservation. For the first time an unrestricted faith in all that is and in the issues of all that happens has burst forth triumphantly into song.

"Out of the bulk, the morbid and the shallow,

Out of the bad majority, the varied countless frauds of men and states,
Electric, antiseptic yet, cleaving, suffusing all,

Only the good is universal."

It is in the prophetic, master handling of this theme—the universal religious faith in man—that Walt Whitman stands forth as the Poet of Democracy. Not alone of any present crude and elementary idea of mere political equality, but of a democracy involving such a world wide unity of faith in the goodness of God and the glory of his creation, that men everywhere will rise to claim their heritage of sonship with the Divine. In Walt Whitman one might almost fancy come back to earth the inspired writer of Genesis. Returned with the wisdom of ages upon him so he might amplify and expand that great revelation. In the beginning God saw everything that He had made and it was very good and God created man in His own image. "In His own image"—with Walt Whitman this "great idea" is so great that again and again as he sits down to play on the organ of his magnificent imagination, this theme sounds first and is followed by a poetic figure of such width and variation as bewilders his audience. "Heaven high, hell deep" is his reach of the harmonies of creation; all chords, discords, melodies, single notes, in his inspiration he endeavors to sound, till at last he is driven to confess his impotence of expression before the glory of it all.

When I undertake to tell the best, I find I cannot,

My tongue is ineffectual on its pivots,
My breath will not be obedient to its organs,

I become a dumb man.

And so he sums up his aspirations and focuses his belief in a "Song of the Universal,"

Give me, O God, to sling that thought,
Give me, give him or her I love this quenchless faith,

Belief in plan of Thee enlosed in Time and Space,
Health, peace, salvation universal.

And the practical outcome of his faith is his democracy. A twofold democracy, which on its Godward side reveals man aware of his high destiny and conscious that obedience to his Creator involves, not self-abasement, but nobility of bearing; while manward this democracy demands not only an equality of advantage political and economic, but throughout the whole range of life freedom and a chance for all to develop, mentally their minds, and spiritually their characters, to the utmost limit of capacity.

By God, I will accept nothing which all cannot have their counterpart of on the same terms.

First, then, the true democrat is to stand upright and fearless before God; for if we are to have any dealings with Him it must be as men, and not as anything lower in the scale of creation. Comrades, coworkers with Him in the edification of the universe, we are to hold ourselves before God as do Kipling's angels, "gentlemen unafraid."

I have said that the soul is not more than the body,

And I have said that the body is not more than the soul,

And nothing, not God, is greater to one than one's self is.

We may well reflect that this attitude is, indeed, the first condition of receiving direction and instruction from God—even as the voice came to the prophet of old, prostrate in his self-abasement, "Son of Man, stand upon thy feet and I will speak with thee."

Thus we are to say to the young man facing the world, as he sets out on his moral adventure, "you have declared war against a powerful foe, you have a stern battle to fight, you are entered on a perilous quest, but you are not a poor helpless creature, you are born for success, you are made for a conqueror. Yes, and your victory depends on your own pride of character, your dignity, your high self respect." So will his life and its object become positive and not negative, so will he be drawn

upwards by and to an attractive ideal and not merely impelled mechanically towards a goal.

And humility! which some fancy has been lost sight of. No, not lost sight of, but humility—to quote again Anne Gilchrist with her "Eternal Womanly" insight into the spirit of the New Age—

Humility is the sweet spontaneous grace of an aspiring finely developed nature which sees always heights ahead still unclimbed, which outstrips itself in eager longing for excellence still unattained.

Secondly, and for their attitude to society we are to say with our poet to men and women everywhere,

Whoever you are! claim your own at any hazard.

Not indeed as suggesting an ultimate ideal of life but as a step towards fulfillment, as a democratic principle of progress. For as the Law preceded the fuller revelation of Love, so the ever completer establishment of justice must keep preceding the fuller development of Christian life social or individual. We must be just before we can presume to be generous, love must be based on integrity, peace on purity. Thus we are to call on men to claim their own, their just rights, no more but no less; that is their moral own, which is far enough from to-day's standard of ownership, namely "to keep all you get and get all you legally can." "Whoever you are! claim your own" inalienable rights—for however much schoolmen may protest against the theory they rail in vain against the consciousness of the divine rights of men. Whoever you are, man or woman, claim your right to think, speak and be heard on any matter affecting the common welfare, yes, and your right to register your opinion so it may be counted among the sum of opinions on either side the controversy. "Whoever you are! claim your own," your right of access to nature and to nature's opportunities for labor or for enjoyment—the bounty of the All Father—of which you are now deprived to your soul's great loss, by social maladjustment and a collective perversion of the moral law. "Claim your own," not indeed for your own sake but that having "laid her foundation in sapphire"—that is in truth and justice—the city may rise to the full adornment of a beautiful and lovely civilization.—W. L. Torrance, in *The Hiram House Life of Cleveland, O.*

Real conceit is only hurt by what is not said about it.—Puck.