A Study of Walt Whitman,

THE POET OF MODERN DEMOCRACY.

By the Hon. Roden Noel.

PART II.

We will now consider briefly Walt Whitman's position as prophet and teacher.

From the very extraordinary and powerful poem called 'Walt Whitman' (not reprinted by Mr. Rossetti, but a part of which is quoted by Mr. Buchanan, and is therefore accessible to the general reader) we may get a fair notion of its general character. Mr. Buchanan gives an excellent description of it: 'Whitman is here for the time being, and for poetical purposes, the cosmical man, an entity, a representation of the great forces. And here he expresses with immense power the infinite culminating worth of personality—how all natural influences have been and are ever working up to constitute and develop a man, a woman, a person. It is the broad dignity of a man, as a man, he preaches: very little the special privileges of distinguished men, or favoured classes of men. This is the very spirit and truth of democracy:

> Rise after rise bow the phantoms behind me;
> A far down I see the first huge nothing—I know I was even then;
>
> I waited unseen and always, and slept through the lethargic mist,
> And took my time, and took no hurt from the fetid carbon.
>
> Immense have been the preparations for me,
> Faithful and friendly the arms that have helped me;
>
> Cycles ferried my cradle, rowing and rowing like cheerful boatmen;
>
> For room to me, stars kept aside in their own rings,
> They sent influences to look after what was to hold me;
> Before I was born out of my mother generations guided me;
> My embryo has never been torpid—nothing could overlay it;

For it the nebula cohered to an orb,
The long slow strata piled to rest it on,
Vast vegetable gave it sustenance,
Monstrous sauroids transported it in their mouths and deposited it with care ;

All forces have been steadily employed to complete and delight me ;
Now on this spot I stand with my robust soul.

In a poem of extraordinary vigour, though one of those where he puts down innumerable items—yet here for a great and distinct pervading purpose—'Salut au Monde,' after passing in rapid review, and addressing with graphic characteristic epithet or two almost all conceivable inhabitants of the globe—great, refined, small, vulgar, bad, good—he says :

Each of us inevitable,
Each of us limitless, each of us with his or her right upon the earth ;

Each of us allowed the eternal purports of the earth,
Each of us here as divinely as any is here.

My spirit has passed in compassion and determination around the whole earth ;
I have looked for equals and lovers, and found them ready for me in all lands,

And, in 'Starting from Paumanok,' he says :

Creeds and schools in abeyance,
I harbour for good or bad—I permit to speak at every hazard—
Nature now without check, with primal energy . . .
. . And sexual organs and acts ! do you concentrate in me ;
For I am determined to tell you with courageous clear voice, to prove you illustrious . . .

This last determination he carries out in a series of poems (not reprinted by Mr. Rossetti) called 'Children of Adam.' Again he resolves :

I will sing the song of companionship,
I will write the evangel poem of comrades and love,
For who but I should understand love, with all its sorrow and joy,
And who but I should be the poet of comrades ?

And this he does (as I think most nobly, and with real originality) in a series called 'Calamus.' Some of these, under a different heading, Mr. Rossetti reproduces. Thus we have 'The Friend,' 'Meeting Again,' 'Parting Friends,' 'Envy,' 'The City of Friends,' 'The Love of Comrades' :

Come, I will make the continent indissoluble ;
I will make the most splendid race the sun ever yet shone upon !
I will make divine magnetic lands
With the love of comrades,
With the life-long love of comrades.

I will plant companionship thick as trees along all the rivers of America, and along
the shores of the great lakes, and all over the prairies ;
I will make inseparable cities, with their arms about each other's necks,
By the love of comrades,
By the manly love of comrades.

'Fit Audience' is another of these, and the charming 'Singing in Spring.' One is called 'Out of the Crowd':

Out of the rolling ocean, the crowd, came a drop gently to me,
Whispering *I love you; before long I die!*
I have travelled a long way merely to look on you, to touch you,
For I could not die till I once looked on you,
For I feared I might afterward lose you.

Now we have met, we have looked, we are safe,
Return in peace to the ocean, my love ;
I too am part of the ocean, my love ;
Behold the great rondure—the cohesion of all, how perfect!

But it is, perhaps, too much to expect that this series of poems will ever be liked here. With us, men friends must like each other from a very long distance, with many a formal grating between—may, indeed, without gross impropriety, touch the tips of each other's fingers ; any warmer sentiment or demonstration of such—any love, for instance, into which a sense of beauty and grace should enter, would be greeted among us with a storm of most virtuous execration and horror. This, of course, is a matter of idiosyncrasy—a question of national temperament : moral axioms, indeed, are mostly founded on men's temperaments ; their reasons (or no reasons) being invented as an after-thought. But those who cannot quite go the whole length of the British Philistine in this respect will admire Whitman's ideal of manly friendship—warm, faithful, founded in mutual love as well as mutual esteem—and will believe with him, that if there were more of it, States and peoples would be nobler and stronger.

Atomism ; solitary, self-supporting, self-seeking, competing, contending isolation—each for himself—is our ideal ; our ideal in private life, our ideal in political economy. It is not the ideal of Christianity, as understood by Christ and His disciples, and the early Church. But—

John P.
Robinson, he
Sez they didn't know everything down in Judee.

And the most orthodox Christians now, though ready to roast any honest person who says it, seem practically very much to agree with him. One's wife and children indeed, as part of one's family, as belonging to oneself ; and sometimes even a poor relation, as coming within the

enchanted circle—these may be regarded (in a married man's case) as one or two satellites revolving round that great centre of an Englishman's solar system—himself.

'To Working Men' is a very characteristic poem. The great catholic, all-yearning heart of the man who shrinks from no one, however deceived and degraded; who longs to take each and all into his brotherman's heart, solace and succour, and bring him nearer, not to his (the lover's) individual standard, but to his, the beloved man's, own ideal manhood—comes out finely here. Does it not breathe the very spirit of Christ?—

> If you become degraded, criminal, ill, then I become so for your sake;
> If you remember your foolish and outlawed deeds, do you think I
> Cannot remember my own foolish and outlawed deeds?
> If you carouse at the table, I carouse at the opposite side of the table.

Then he continues to expound his central conviction of the supreme worth of manhood—personality:

> We consider Bibles and religions divine—I do not say they are not divine;
> I say that they have all grown out of you, and may grow out of you still;
> It is not they who give the life, it is you who give the life.
>
> Leaves are not more shed from the trees, or trees from the earth, than they are shed out of you.
>
> . . . The sum of all known reverence I add up in you, whoever you are,
> The President is there in the White House for you; it is not you who are here for him.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> All doctrines, all politics, and civilisations exsurge from you;
> If you were not breathing and walking here, where would they all be?
> The most renowned poems would be ashes, oration, and plays would be vacuums.
>
> All architecture is what you do to it when you look upon it;
> All music is what awakes from you when you are reminded by the instruments.

If we look for some one to lament over his age, how base, how lethargic, how vulgar and prosaic it is, and how no one can possibly get the materials of poetry out of it; evidently we must not go to Walt Whitman. If we have not great poetry, he would probably ascribe it, not to the fault of the age, but to that of the poets who despise and despair of it. There are low and grovelling and unbeautiful tendencies enough, God knows; but we need men to see what is good and great in us, and to urge us on to nobler and richer life—hardly to stand by and curse us unhelpfully, as Shimei did David. And though it is quite true that Whitman is not an artist primarily—he is too indifferent in shaping beautiful works of ark out of his rich materials; he does not care for art at all for art's sake—yet he does abundantly prove the *spirit* in

which a poet may look even at this present age, and lift it up into the regions of art, if he only will. Faith, Hope, need not be extinct among us; there is a Future; let us help to shape it. Whitman intimates that he looks to a wider, fuller life for all men, for average men and average women; when love shall prevail, and individualities shall be allowed fuller play; when each shall be reverenced and respected for what he is, his place in the harmonious community admitted; a richer community, made up from many types of person; when the dignity of flesh and its impulses shall be acknowledged, under due restraint from those principles which are yet higher in our nature—as, for instance, the sympathetic principle; when men shall reverence one another for what they are—not on delusive artificial grounds that afford no true reason for reverence, but serve only to confuse our truer instincts of veneration, to render us superstitious and idolatrous.

Robert Buchanan among Englishmen has produced some noble poetry out of these same unpromising materials, though shabby gentility and dainty academics may shudder at it as vulgar. And since Pope produced poems unsurpassable of their kind out of the analytic critical tendencies of his time, more unpromising than any, who shall pronounce, *à priori*, that Clough and Arnold must fail because *they* try to draw music from the mingled forebodings, foreshadowings, hopes, despairs, and speculations of our own? Surely this wondrous mysterious twilight over a world that has fissures opening into Hell and vistas that invite to Heaven, surely this twilight may have music of its own—music that shall be no frigid imitation of one that is no more.

Nothing, of course, can be easier, than to say, certain subjects are unpoetical, unfit for art. Railroads are, manufactures are, mysticism of any kind and philosophy—anxious questionings, wonderings, tremulous fears and hopes—these are. For they are not in Homer, or Pope, or some one else. I say it depends entirely on how they are touched, in what *spirit* they are taken up and treated, whether they are poetical or not; that we must judge honestly by poetical results, not judge the works given forth by preconceived theories, and utterly baseless idiosyncrasies; not even by the *ipse dixits* of a fraternity of critics: all that passes—good work remains, and another generation acknowledges it to be good. There is a *valet* way of looking at *every* present epoch; only the old poets and prophets had a way of their own. Men and women still live and love, and toil and suffer. Explorers and pioneers open up new continents, bring the people of to-day face to face with wonderful races of the past, isolated yet alive, or mummied in their tombs; vast human problems press for solution: science enlarges her kingdom, and opens out new worlds to the imagination: Nature is eternal around us: and while we wait expectant, as yet uncertain by

what Word the eruptive forces we hear rumbling, as they gather anew deep down in the very depths of our humanity, shall become articulate in human language, we can turn to Her, ever undisturbed, ever young, ever calm, and read in her countenance inexhaustible meanings by the glimmers of light shed ever freshly upon her out of restless, ever-complicating labyrinths of our own human spirits. Enough if there be among us an undercurrent of sterling life—a thankfulness for victories acheived, a looking for victories to come, a keen relish for life as it is, or a strong desire to make it nobler.

Now look a moment at the poem 'Whosoever.' Perhaps none serves to bring out Whitman's central doctrine of all personal worth so thoroughly as this :

None but would subordinate you—I only am he who will never consent to subordinate you ;
I only am he who places over you no master, owner, better, god, beyond what waits intrinsically in yourself.
Painters have painted their swarming groups, and the centre figure of all ;
From the head of the centre figure spreading a nimbus of gold-coloured light.
But I paint myriads of heads ; but paint no head without its nimbus of gold-coloured light.
. . . The mockeries are not you.
Underneath them and within them I see you lurk ;
I pursue you where none else has pursued you.
. . . The shaved face, the unsteady eye, the impure complexion, if these baulk others they do not baulk me.
. . . There is no virtue, no beauty, in man or woman, but as good is in you ;
No pleasure waiting for others, but an equal pleasure waits for you.
. . . I sing the songs of the glory of none—not God—sooner than I sing the songs of the glory of you.
Whoever you are, claim your own at any hazard !

All this is very striking, and is a vigorous proclamation of a great truth, of *the* greath truth which the time is beginning to see more and more clearly. Yet in this, as in the preceding passages quoted to illustrate Whitman's teaching on this score, there is (as is wont to be the case in the proclamations of most prophets), a certain one-sidedness, exaggeration, looseness of thought. When he says above that all doctrines, politics, civilisation, sculpture, poems, histories, 'exsurge from *you*,' (the average man, any man), the truth underlying this is that all these come out of human nature—out of individuals, indeed, but out of individuals who could not have existed, as they were without the help of all previous human and other history, without the moulding of their age, and of the average men and women from whom they spring, and who take their part in educating these more distinguished spirits. These last are the mouthpieces of their time, and help to mould the future man, even the present average man. But his nature, too, has a root identity with

theirs, has germs and rudiments of the same faculties; and the life of all great works derives continuous vitality from kindred spirits which comprehend them, and kindred creations are roused through the contemplation of them. Now Whitman thus proclaims that men are 'of one blood,' are kindred amid all their differences; so that a man, any man, may claim fellowship with the best and mightiest of his race, *may* therefore enfold within himself the principles of sublimest heroic and intellectual manhood; is anyhow and at worst a person, a self, in a higher sense than any other creatures are, and may claim from all his fellows to be acknowledged and reverenced as such! from his society, and all functionaries of his society (however powerful and dignified) may claim such possible facilities as shall enable him to make the best of himself and his special capabilities. Though, indeed, one would have fancied that something of this kind was precisely what our Lord Jesus Christ had proclaimed with some force more than one thousand eight hundred years ago. Only such truths take a good deal of proclaiming. His followers did not quite like them, and thought it, on the whole, for the advantage of the brute mass (and of themselves), if they could make out that He had in fact proclaimed precisely the opposite of such truths. They need, therefore, reasserting, and in a modern fashion. But the big people and the good people will not like them any better. What a chorus of pious horror, when some one said that Christ was the first Socialist! Yet for all that *magna est veritas et prævalebit.*

Notwithstanding, I do think, when we are making a study of these doctrines, we ought to point out where they seem to need considerable guarding and qualification.

Men are not individual only, but members of a community, of a body politic. And Whitman accordingly would supplement this bold uncompromising assertion of individual dignity by the inculcation of love, of the most ardent and self-sacrificing spirit of fraternity. 'Liberty, equality, fraternity.' Here again he is Christian enough. But is equality a truth in the manner in which he asserts it? I believe not; and if not, it must be so far mischievous to assert it. That common manhood is a greater, more cardinal fact than any distinctions among men which raise one above another I most firmly believe. Still these distinctions do exist, and so palpable a fact cannot be ignored without very serious injury. If great men could not have been without average men, and owe most to the grand aggregate soul of the ideal unit, humanity—which is a pregnant truth—yet, on the other hand, this grand aggregate soul could never have been what it is, could never have been enriched with the treasures it now enjoys, without those most personal of all personalities—prophets, heroes, men of genius. If these men need to be reminded, as they do, of the rock whence they are hewn, there is yet a

danger of average men mistaking such a message as that of modern democracy through so powerful a spokesman as Whitman, and insisting upon paring down the ideal superiority of their great ones too much to the level of their own chaotic uniformity, rather than acknowledging and venerating what is verily superior in these; taking them for leaders in regions where they are appointed by nature to lead, and generally aiming to raise themselves so far as possible to the standard of a higher excellence thus set before them.

In order to satisfy this law of *inequality* among men, I do not believe that the mere proclamation of friendly love as between comrades (any more than of sexual love and equal union between man and woman) is at all sufficient. Veneration, reverence, also must be proclaimed, as equally necessary; and the great point we ought to aim at, in helping to solve the momentous question of the social future, seems in that respect to be this—that mankind be taught, and gradually accustomed, to place their reverence where reverence is indeed due, and not upon mere idols of popular superstition. It is said (and, alas! with some truth) that if you tear people from before one false shrine, they may only grovel before a baser one. But I say this should be *the end* kept steadily in view—to stir up that which is noblest in ourselves, in order that we may be able to venerate that which is most venerable in others, and may ourselves be raised more near to their standard. That every man, *whatever he be now*, is to be supremely satisfied with himself as he is now, is of course not in the least what Whitman means; but there is a danger of his sometimes vague and unguarded language being so understood by the natural average man, who is already well disposed to be satisfied with his lower habitual self, and make *himself* the measure of the standard to which the Universe on the whole will do well to conform. This may too readily result in the tyranny of a blind and prejudiced and ignorant majority; by no means selecting men in any department of the State or of private occupations for their special fitness to guide and manage in such particular positions, and to introduce a higher ideal of life or of work, but rather jealous, hostile, or indifferent to these, and basely suspicious of their higher manly worth, their larger knowledge, and their vaster power. We *must worship something;* and what we most tend to worship is any larger and more successful incarnation of our meaner, less noble selves. The average Briton, for instance, has a sort of complacent air about him as if he was quite sure, not only that the Deity is like an average Briton, but even that the Deity ought to be very thankful for being so. Utter individual freedom and self-assertion, unbalanced by any counterbalancing principle of deference, humility, and reverence, has far too much tendency to resolve itself into this, which just makes real progress impossible, and might throw humanity far back awhile, even in

the very midst of democracy and perfect political freedom. But what Whitman does see so clearly is that, even when men have themselves elected a ruler, or been concerned in the choice of a form of government, there is a sort of glamour of the imagination which immediately invests any actual depositary of power, and bows them in a kind of unreasonable stupor before it. He therefore reminds them—you, the people, are the source of such power, and government exists for you, not you for government. Obey it intelligently; modify it when reason requires.

Wealth, honour, and rank have the same way of casting a glamour over the imagination, so that men do not concern themselves with enquiring what the source of such wealth may be, or how far wealth and rank may involve personal qualities which are indeed worthy of some reverence. But these are accomplished facts on the surface, vague powers; and we are apt to be enslaved by them, because we have not been educated to enshrine a true God in the place of these usurpers—usurpers, that is, if they assume the highest place, as they so generally do.

It behoves, therefore, to look a little closer at such broad statements as those we have quoted from Whitman. Architecture, sculpture, religions, &c., *are a great deal more* than what the average man does to them when he thinks about them. They were much more in the creative genius of those who invented them, or at least gave the final and complete form they took. And as to their being ashes and vacuums now but for the average man, this is far more than anyone may presume to say. There may be some persons who do comprehend them nearly as they were—one or two even may cause them to take on now a profounder and more general significance than they wore of old, though they are never again precisely the living foremost products of the moving world-spirit which they were then. But, at any rate, their significance must be quite infinite, and in proportion, moreover, to the place that they then filled in the history of the world. The pulsations that they caused may no longer be visible in the shape of circling waves, but their effect can never cease. That is a law in physics, and shall it be less a law in the higher spiritual sphere? Assuredly not. It is well to remind men that they may enter into all these things if they will claim their privileges; still it will be well to remember that every man does not, will not, and this verily because he cannot, enter into them. It is after all, and ever will be, the privilege of some. *Each has his function*, each is excellent, viewed from a higher standpoint; even the cruel and the base are. But certainly we must not suppose that we can all have the same place, and fill equally well the functions of everybody else. Such a principle can only lead to endless confusion and mistake. Rather does the true principle of human dignity consist

in learning and acknowledging the worth and necessity of every function, so that no one shall henceforth be ashamed of his post, however humble, and that no one shall foolishly look down upon him for filling it—look down on him only if he refuse to fill it, or fill it unworthily and carelessly. Society must see to it, indeed, that each man at his post be regarded as man, his other human claims not being disregarded. But his position as worker in any capacity is to be esteemed honourable; nor need everybody be in such a desperate hurry to become something which he is not, and which all assuredly cannot be, to the detriment and ill-being of those who do not succeed in this general scramble for pelf and consideration, but remain, as they must, a vast majority of condemned pariahs on the lower rungs of the social ladder. To wear a black coat, and win the estimable privilege of making one's workmen fight as fiercely with oneself for bread as one fought with one's own master before !—that is what political economy says we must all make haste and do. In this light, this unguarded proclamation of the absolute equality of man appears to be somewhat confounding and dangerous. An ideal social scheme would rather consist in every man claiming his own, and acknowledging the special aptitudes of his neighbour. And as to religions, poems, architecture, and civilisations, even supposing they did not live in their infinite proportional effects, they have lived, they have been, whether the average man knows to-day anything about them or not.

But it is fair to admit that Whitman does now and then distinctly acknowledge the claims of greatness to lead mankind, and insists on the supreme worth of *ideal manhood—strong mastering* personality; and these passages are to be set against the others. In the 'Song of the Broad Axe' he does this finely. And nothing can be nobler and more complete than his description of an ideal great city or state. In it he goes dead against the too prevalent worship of material resources and material power. It is where the most virtuous, most loving, most independent citizens are; where the fullest life of intellect, heart and soul is; where the happiness and good of *each one* stands sacred and secure, so far as the community can secure it.

That each person to himself is a centre of the whole as no other creature can be, that *to that person* the whole universe centres in himself, and that all really has worked up to me, and for me, with my marvellous consciousness, which creates not only a Me, but at the same moment creates over again in me the whole world so far as I know it—this most strikingly our author asserts. Only there is peril of our not remembering that there are other selves, and some selves much greater than ourselves, especially when we are assured that there is 'no better, no master, no god over us beyond what exists intrinsically in ourselves.'

From a poem called 'Greatnesses,' however, we may set the following against that :

> Great is Justice !
> Justice is not settled by legislators and laws—it is in the soul ;
> It cannot be varied by statutes, any more than love, pride, gravity ;
> It is *immutable*—it does *not depend on majorities—majorities or*
> *What not come at last before the same passionless and exact tribunal.*

So that we see the truth to be, Whitman believes the ideal manhood to be whole in each man, only waiting, hidden in some; and he calls men up to this, out of their baser everyday selves. In this again, he does not surely differ much from the teaching of the most illustrious Christian teachers. This is precisely what William Law and Mr. Maurice proclaim; only it is true their doctrine is otherwise put. Whitman says that the ideal man is in every man. Christian teachers more platonically assert that every man rather is in the ideal Man. Readers may think that makes not so very much difference. Still, there *is* a radical difference in the way of looking at the question; for it makes a great difference whether we are to look *into ourselves, and ourselves only,* for spiritual elevation above our ordinary selves, or whether we are to look *out of ourselves* to a possible source of higher self-hood, which yet at present is by no means present in ourselves. But to understand Whitman better when he says that he 'sets no god over anyone,' let us look for a moment at the most metaphysical or quasi-theological piece he has written, called 'The Square Deific.' If I rightly apprehend him, though the piece is none of the plainest, he makes the Divine All to consist, as it were, of a square, a four-sided figure. The first manifestation, which he calls '*God,*' appears to be in the character of natural laws as they incessantly, inexorably manifest themselves in time, in all phenomena. 'Relentless I forgive no man; whosoever sins, dies. I will have that man's life. Have the seasons, gravitation, the appointed days, mercy ? No more have I.' Secondly comes '*the Saviour,*' of whom Christ is the most prominent embodiment. It is the spirit of love and self-sacrifice and mercy, as it exists among men. Thirdly comes *Satan,* 'Aloof, dissatisfied, plotting revolt. Crafty, despised, a drudge, ignorant, with sullen face and worn brow;' in short, the principle of ignorance, suffering, hatred, selfishness, baseness, as it appears among men. Finally comes *the Spirit,* 'including Life, God, Saviour, Satan, Essence of Forms, Life of the Real Identities, Life of the Sun and Stars, the general soul.'

Well, here all appears to me to be what we call phenomenal, with nothing positively transcendental in it. I mean that this simply *enumerates as divine and constituting God*—(1) The natural external laws of nature (whether of spirit or matter), (2) Love as it is in men, (3) Hate, and suffering, and ignorance, as they are in men, (4) The one essence

inclusive of all these, founding and giving them existence. Now I think with Whitman this latter principle is merely an abstraction; it is simply all the others, with the special characteristics of each left out. I doubt from the language if Whitman means here to assert a *transcendental ground, cause, principle of all that is in time,* itself away from time, not to be prisoned in the forms of intelligence, but by the very structure of intelligence demanding to be believed in and worshipped; worshipped as source of all life and power, as well as worshipped in phenomenal effects, personalities, and things. It may be otherwise; but he seems to me not distinctly to conceive and believe in such a divine principle; simply to deify men and nature as we see them—now regarding them as separate entities, now viewing them as partakers of one identical yet divinely manifested life. That is true, but to me it is not all—only half. And if he held the other half truth, why should he distinctly say that he places no god over any of us? Whereas the fact is, that the development of any personality (as of any other thing that begins to be and changes, while retaining a certain mysterious identity from moment to moment) were *absolutely inconceivable,* without admitting a principle of such successive existence entirely out of the sphere of antecedent or present phenomena. For when anything begins to be seen for the first time, it is evident that nothing whatsoever which was before (being by the very conditions of the case different and other) can possibly be accepted as its efficient, but only as its condition, or occasional cause. Yet the common sense of mankind and the consciousness of every man insist that there must be an efficient cause for all that begins. Invariable succession and order of phenomena have nothing whatever to do with this, though the common fallacy is to suppose that the antecedents are in an efficient sense causative of the consequents. Since, however, all phenomena in their actual order are necessary to any special effect, the special causes of all these must be co-operative with its special cause to produce it: but these causes are alike transcendental. While, on the other hand, if intelligence and will in a divine person were taken as the cause of phenomena, they would explain nothing, and fulfil the conditions of the problem no better, because phenomena as they are in time, are not identical with them, as they would be in the divine ideas; for else they would have existed before, whereas they now begin to exist; but it is this *very beginning to exist* which demands explanation, demands an *adequate cause.* It remains, therefore, only to admit that such ultimate cause cannot be prisoned in forms of understanding; yet since it is, it is the very source and essence of our, as of every other, life and power; and before this principle of special life and power comes forth to constitute ourselves (as it does every successive moment we exist, changing and modifying us) our special life and personality are to be regarded

as folded up in God; yet this is to be viewed only as a flexible adaptation to our varying intelligence.

One more word. Whitman, I think, not obscurely intimates more than once that he believes in personal immortality, but I do not think the doctrine plays any important part in his system. And what he says of death seems to me often very fine, quite independently of any such doctrine of immortality. His notion of what the future life of a person is to be, *how* that person can strictly be said to live again beyond death, is evidently of the vaguest; and so vague is it that nearly all he says on this subject can be adopted thankfully and admiringly even by those who do not see their way to holding a strictly personal immortality.

Thus, in 'Nearing Departure,' he says:

> A dread beyond, of I know not what, darkens me.
> O book and chant! must all then amount to but this?
> And yet it is enough, O Soul?
> O soul! we *have positively appeared—that is enough.*

In 'Wherefore,' too, he says, yielding for awhile to sadness, doubt, despondency, about the poor results achieved through incessant apparently useless struggle:—

> What good amid these, O me, O life?

Then he answers:

> That *you are here, that life exists and identity,*
> That the *powerful play goes on and you will contribute a verse.*

Such, indeed, is that of which at least we are certain. The least may know that the eternities centre in him. Now, he is—they could not possibly be without him, even as he is—and they diverge from him again; a seed he is of all Divine futurity. Surely, *if* we cease personally to exist after this—this is something to know; and we may make our lives a conscious contribution, after our measure, to the sacred cause of humanity, we may live out of the bounds of our own little selves, and so inherit the ages. But in truth no one can cease to be; for the essence of each is eternal in God.

Again, in a wonderful little bit, 'To one shortly to Die,' he says:—

> The sun bursts through in unlooked-for directions;
> Strong thoughts fill you, and confidence—you smile!
> You forget you are sick, as I forget you are sick;
> You do not see the medicines—you do not mind the weeping friends—I am with you,
> *I exclude others from you—there is nothing to be commiserated;*
> *I do not commiserate—I congratulate you.*

Again, elsewhere, he says:

> You are *henceforth secure whatever comes and goes.*

And why? Surely any one may say it.

We are, we have been, what can change that? And, moreover, the efforts of us must continue, infinite, immense, in precise proportion to what we are and have been. We cannot, even to-day, identify ourselves with the human creature that is popularly called ourselves in the cradle. No self-consciousness now can unite the selves we are conscious of with that life. Scarcely can we identify ourselves with the intelligent children that we dimly remember ourselves to have been; we may completely have shifted personality; and we may regard what others call *ourselves* as more strange to us now than those persons of a bygone age, who are dead indeed, but in whose souls and spirits we find to-day more communion, more sympathy, than in any with whom, though living, we are in contact of mere proximity. There shall be a continuous consciousness not unlike ours; and other persons in the future may obscurely, yet rejoicingly, identify themselves with us.

In Mr. Lincoln's Funeral Hymn, Whitman sings:

> Blossoms and branches green to coffins all I bring,
> For fresh as the morning—thus would I chant a song for you,
> O SANE AND SACRED DEATH.

I suppose what will shock the majority most is Whitman's admitting evil and misfortune as part of the necessary order, entering as integral elements into the *Square Deific*. Wherein he follows the small shoemaker, and great philosopher, Jacob Behmen. Yet, after all that has been said about it, thus it is. It affords, as imperfection, the necessary stepping-stone to spiritual and moral progress; it affords the opposition necessary to call out goodness, and kindness, love, virtuous strife, and victory. All goes in this universe by a play of contraries, or where would be the life, the advance, the infinite and harmonious variety?

Without Satan, where would be the Saviour?