HORACE TRAUBEL.

BY O. E. LESSING.

IF Horace Traubel had merely been Whitman's friend and biographer he would forever be counted among the most remarkable characters in American literature. The author of *With Walt Whitman in Camden* easily ranks with Boswell and Lockhart to whom he has so often been likened and is second to Eckermann solely for the reason that Goethe's universal genius means incomparably more to mankind than do Dr. Johnson, Walter Scott, and Walt Whitman put together. Traubel's own work as a recorder and narrator could not have been more intelligent, accurate, and truthful. With all his ardent love for his hero he did not "prettify" or idealize him. He stated the facts as he observed them, bringing out the shades as well as the lights in his graphic account of the physical and spiritual life of the poet. Traubel, Whitman's most intimate and most trusted friend, the founder of the Whitman Fellowship, the editor of *The Conservator* which for thirty years was the center of Whitman study —Traubel is not responsible for that problematic "Whitmania" to which the minds of so many others succumbed. To him Whitman was a great human being, a comrade, not a saint or a demigod. He was always opposed to any form of canonization or deification, while he was generous enough, as an editor, to admit to the columns of *The Conservator* the most exalted eulogies of devotees side by side with scathing criticisms of skeptics as long as he found sincerity of conviction in the writers.

So far only three of the six volumes planned have been published. The manuscript of Volume IV, ready for the press, has been in the hands of Doubleday, Page & Co. for so many years that their sin of omission, in withholding from the world so important a human document, is becoming more and more unpardonable. Mrs. Traubel will, let us hope, bring the great work to conclusion.

The Conservator, unfortunately, has passed out of existence

with its editor. *The Conservator* was Traubel himself. Its thirty volumes not only reflect thirty years of history of American literature from a Whitmanesque point of view but also thirty years of evolution of Traubel's own personality. He gave to Whitman a full measure of his tribute without effacing himself. For Traubel was a great and original personality. Critics who are wont to look down upon him as a sort of literary vassal and imitator, do so because they know neither Traubel nor Whitman. Traubel was proud of his mission of continuing the tradition, of keeping the flame of love and liberty burning. The closing words of his beautiful in memoriam, "O My Dead Comrade" read:

"O my great dead!
You had not gone, you had stayed—in my heart, in my veins,
Reaching through me, through others through me, through all at last,
our brothers,
A hand to the future."

It is indeed a part of Traubel's historical significance to have carried to its logical conclusions Whitman's unfinished work. But Traubel had, besides, a message distinctly his own.

For the superficial reader the most conspicuous similarity between Whitman and Traubel lies in their form of expression. Traubel's "free verse" appears to be the same as Whitman's. *Optimos,* to be sure, could never have been written without *Leaves of Grass* preceding. But the latter is derived from the Bible, from Ossian, and from other sources which Professor Bliss Perry has pointed out, and to which Emerson in his *Journal* of 1866 adds the Welsh bard Taliessin.[1] But after all Whitman's verse, while externally resembling its models, differs from them in its inner form. Speech melody and rhythm, color and tone, are emanations of Whitman's, and nobody else's, soul. Just so with Traubel. He too, like Whitman, had started out with poems in the conventional technique of rhyme and strophe. Then, under the spell of *Leaves of Grass*, he wrote as late as 1897 and 1898, a number of poems that might pass as skilful copies from Whitman, e. g., "I remember the sensation I felt as I, the farmer's seed, dropt in the earth"; or "The rushed and crowded auditors, the gesturing, hurrying figures on the stage"; or "The Legend of the Road" (all included in *Optimos*). Like

[1] Emerson quotes:

"I am water, I am a wren;
I am a workman, I am a star;
I am a serpent," etc.

Cf. *Journals,* Vol. X, p. 147.

Whitman, Traubel freely utilizes any means the language affords to give force to what he wishes to express. We find the cumulative effects of enumeration, repetition, and parallelism of members, as in the Bible; metrically correct cadences as in classical, synthetic and antithetic juxtaposition by alliteration as in Germanic poetry. We also find an arrangement by groups of thought not unlike the strophes of "regular poetry." Thus, e. g., "I like your love the best of all," opening, as it does, with an iambic tetrameter, contains practically all devices of "regular" technique, the end rhyme excepted. Parts of it sound like reminiscences of St. Paul's hymn to charity (1 Cor. xiii. 1ff.).

> "I like your love the best of all:
> It does not sue for favors or coquet for attentions,
> It takes what love gives when love need not bestow,
> It finds love rich enough in possessing love," etc.

And yet the poem as a whole has a rhythmic swing very different from either Whitman or the English version of St. Paul's epistle.

That the American advocates of Free Verse in their sometimes rather violent controversies with the Regulars never appeal to *Optimos* for support is a riddle the solution of which politeness forbids to offer. Miss Amy Lowell's grotesque autobiographical sketch:

> "The cat and I
> Together in the sultry night
> Waited.
> He greatly desired a mouse;
> I, an idea,"

seems indeed a rather inadequate illustration of modern lyric art, considering the fact that there is an American poet who used free verse for the expression of ideas he never had to wait for. Whitman defined the new lyric form somewhat vaguely as follows: "In my opinion the time has arrived to essentially break down the barriers of form between prose and poetry. I say the latter is henceforth to win and maintain its character regardless of rhyme, and the measurement-rules of iambic, spondee, dactyl, etc., and that.... the truest and greatest *Poetry*, (while subtly and necessarily always rhythmic, and distinguishable easily enough,) can never again, in the English language, be expressed in arbitrary and rhyming meter, any more than the greatest eloquence, or the truest power and passion." He compared the rhythm of his verse to the movements of the ever coming and receding waves of the sea, an observation

which Professor F. N. Scott was able to substantiate upon the basis of scientific analysis.[2]

Like Whitman, Traubel has no elaborate theory to offer. Technicalities never seemed important to him who wished to be rated as a man among men and not as an artist among artists. In the broadest sense of the word he believed that the style was the man. Like Whitman, he demanded that the author be original, natural, true to life, independent of set conventions. To critics who found fault with him for not having anything like style, he replied with the paradox: "The highest affirmation of style is the protest against its rigidity and to having it tethered by a short rope or ribboned to a gown."[3] In his *Collects* he condemns "writers who are trying to write" as "fools, liars, ornamenters, hypocrites, prostitutes of words." Not to speak the truth fearlessly, not to be free and original, not to realize the individual's organic unity with universal life, not to feel and express love of mankind, means "selling your soul." Do not say words; say life, say love—this is Traubel's whole theory. Arno Holz, the master of free verse in Germany, agrees with him in principle when he demands, not a "free verse" but a natural, a necessary, an immanent rhythm which is to be based upon a true valuation of words. "Express what you feel directly as you feel it, and you have the natural rhythm. You grasp it, grasping the things. It is immanent in all phenomena." This, I think, is the most concise formulation of the spirit common to the diversified tendencies in modern literature toward a liberation from the petrified rules of convention.[4]

Traubel, an artist in spite of himself, belongs to the select group of genuine and original creators with whom form and content, theory and execution, the moral and the esthetic, are identical. He lived what he preached. His whole being was filled with one great passion for love and justice. His whole life was devoted to the one great task of imparting the same passion to others. In his writings, therefore, self-expression, the lyric art proper, and the desire for communication with his fellow human beings, are equally balanced. Whatever he says, coming from the very depth of his heart, is true and natural both as self-expression and as an appeal to others. The union of the poet and the prophet in him is as close as it was in Whitman. He is not a singer of songs as, e. g., Burns or Goethe. His poetry and "prose" are, generally speaking, rhetorical and rhap-

[2] Cf. Bliss Perry, *Walt Whitman*, pp. 87ff.

[3] *The Conservator*, Feb., 1898.

[4] Cf. my essay on Arno Holz in *Masters in Modern German Literature*.

sodic like some of Schiller's philosophical poems. Since love and justice are his central theme, the leitmotif, ever present in however many variations, Traubel's style has developed a singular uniformity of expression within each of his books. There are no such contrasts as between Whitman's subjectively lyric outburst "Tears" and the epic elegy "When lilacs last in the door-yard bloom'd." *Optimos* is, on the whole, a book of rhapsodies proclaiming the gospel of universal love. It is a democratic *Zarathustra*, and, as regards style, it is in its own peculiar way, like its aristocratic counterpart, a descendant of the Bible.

However, Traubel masters also another technique which he gradually evolved from the prose of his editorials and reviews. It is the "rhythmical prose" of *Chants Communal* and *Collects* so distasteful to the average critic. The first of the *Chants* begins: "Forever first of all is justice. Is love. Not the food you eat. Not the clothes you wear. Not the luxuries you enjoy. But justice." Another passage reads: "No compromise with the enemy. Most of all no compromise with yourself. Steady. Steady. What can I do? What can you do? Look at the gathered forces of trespass. Do you not see what you can do? Do I not see what I can do?" It is more than probable that no teacher of college rhetoric would ever have granted Traubel as much as a passing mark if he had had the misfortune of being subjected to the "rules." Judged by scholastic standards, Traubel's English is extremely incorrect: sentences that are no sentences at all; a most bewildering punctuation; and such bad grammar as "he don't" and "as if there was." But Traubel never cared for academic grades and degrees. He did not even pretend to be a professional writer, much less to be a *poeta laureatus*. He only claimed to be an individual human being with the privilege of expressing his thoughts and feelings in his own individual way. And such has been his way for many years—not always.

Just as his poetry was first conventional, so was his prose. As late as 1897 he wrote editorials as correctly regular as any schoolmaster could wish. *The Conservator* was a magazine not unlike others. It contained articles on political, economic, social, literary, and philosophical questions. Whitman and whatever, directly or indirectly, concerned him, stood in the foreground. Even one of Whitman's personal hobbies, the Shakespeare-Bacon theory, was loyally preserved and enlarged upon. In religious matters Whitman's liberal universalism prevailed, with, however, a decided turn to a consistent monism. As a symptom it may be proper here

to note that *The Monist* was then being advertised in *The Conservator*. Somewhat in the fashion of our standard weeklies, Traubel's editorials, divided into paragraphs, dealt with the current issues of the day. December, 1895: "To Philadelphians at this hour the strike of the motormen and conductors employed on its street railways is of uppermost concern," etc. From 1897 on the sentences become shorter. There is noticeable a conscious striving for concentration. The chronicler's narration gives way to a frankly subjective discussion, the method of which is sharply analyzing dialectics. Thesis and antithesis follow each other in a more and more accelerated tempo. "I can see liberty flashed from the sword of revolution. I cannot see liberty on the plowshare[5] or in the shuttle of the looms" (1897). "Queen Victoria has had her innings. In the great jubilation of the imperialist conscience she symbolizes what she does not contain....There are mothers who are not queens who are mothers indeed. There are queens who are not mothers who are scarcely queens and less women than queens."

About a year later the form of a quick succession of miniature sentences or word-groups is reached: The rhythm is prevailingly staccato; the time allegro to presto; the antithesis razor sharp. "Zola is convicted. His victory is complete....Club and man met. The man survives." There is something almost brutally abrupt in such brevity, if the word-groups are taken singly. If read, more especially, if *heard* in their connection with all other word-groups, they fulfil the function of the measures of a musical composition the total effect of which is always impressive and frequently overwhelming. Mildred Bain, in her admirable study on Traubel,[6] interprets the technique of *Collects* with feminine subtlety. "They are symphonic in form....The first movement presents the theme with extended various intimations, always in a major affirmative key. Then there is a pause. The second movement is the descent, telling of the temptations and distresses which assail the soul from a lower plane. I call this the minor movement. Here another pause ensues. Then the third and final movement occurs—lifts its triumphant outcry to the heights in words of mundane reassurance and cosmic affirmation. The *Collects* invariably suggest symphonic music to me." This holds true of the *Chants* too and, not of the rhythm, but of the structural composition of *Optimos*. J. W. Faw-

[5] Ernest Crosby, the author of *Swords and Plowshares, Broad-Cast*, etc., then a contributor to *The Conservator*, may have been responsible for the phraseology in this case.

[6] *Horace Traubel*. New York, Albert and Charles Boni, Publishers, 1913.

cett, in a more recent article,[7] draws a parallel to an Italian mosaic: "Like a little colored tile, each syllable fits into its proper place and has a positive relation to the whole." Whether considered from a musical or from a pictorial point of view, so much is certain that this technique is in perfect harmony with the content. *Optimos* proclaims the gospel of love and justice, as the already existing foundation of a new world order, in rhythms of long sustained, rolling, gliding, or swinging motion. *Chants Communal* and its supplement *Collects* carry the banner of love and justice in an attack against the hostile forces of negation where success depends upon speed and precision. Thus the articles of 1895 were transformed into the *Chants* of 1904 and the *Collects* of 1914, and even Traubel's book reviews assumed the same rhythmical quality. So strong had his personal reaction to all impressions become, so intimate was his penetration of things outside him that he could not help expressing himself on all occasions whatsoever in his own language. The man and his style had merged into one.

II.

I shall always regret that circumstances prevented me from ever meeting Horace Traubel face to face. It was in the course of my Whitman study some fifteen years ago that my attention was first drawn to Traubel. During a temporary sojourn in a German summer resort, cut off from library facilities, I asked him for information on certain problems. He not only fully answered my particular questions but provided me spontaneously and generously with books, magazine articles, newspaper clippings, pictures, and souvenirs so as to surround me with a genuine Whitman atmosphere. After a copy of the valuable and rare collection of documents *In Re Walt Whitman* had been lost in transit, Traubel sent me another with a personal dedication. In many communications that followed he emphasized his satisfaction that spiritual sympathy bridged over even the greatest distances in space. Believing in the brotherhood of individuals and nations, he was happy to have come in contact with some one across the ocean who tried to spread Whitman's message of universal love abroad. For a long time he did not mention his own work. But *The Conservator* inevitably proved to be one of the essential ingredients of the Whitman atmosphere. And then came *Chants Communal* in 1904. I had never read anything like it before: a style so strangely fascinating in its boldness; the theme of love and justice so familiar in its association with Whit-

[7] *The Modernist,* Nov., 1919.

man and the Gospel of Christ, and yet so new in its application to the practical problems of our present-day life. If Whitman's hope for a new, great, indigenous American literature was ever to be realized, here, I felt, was an essential part of its foundation, if not the ideal itself.

It had been my ambition to round out the various translations extant of selections from Whitman's *Leaves* and *Prose,* including an attempt of my own, by a complete "Whitman in German." But this unique work now before me seemed so much more vital, so much closer to the heart of our own time that I immediately began to prepare a version of *Chants Communal* which appeared under the title *Weckrufe* in 1907.[8] If this modest contribution of mine had borne no other fruit but the strengthening of the friendship between author and translator, I should have felt amply rewarded. For it was indeed a privilege to belong to the slowly widening circle of friends whom Traubel stimulated, encouraged, comforted, cheered, by a never-ending stream of tokens of affection and sympathy. If he only sent a picture post-card or a snapshot of himself and his family with a word or two over his signature, or a hastily written note in answer to a question, there was always present the indefinable magnetism of a man whose whole personality pervaded his every word. Like Mr. Fawcett, Mrs. Bain, Mr. Walling,[9] Mr. Karsner,[10] and many others, I can testify to Traubel's absolute and unconditional uprightness, sincerity, truthfulness, and naïveté. His was a child's purity of love combined with a man's strength of character and keenness of intellect. Never, not by a hair's breadth did he deviate from the path of his self-assumed duty: He was of the stuff martyrs are made of. He was all that he wanted others to be: an unselfish lover of mankind. Because he was so strong and so untiringly persistent himself, he was able to give strength to others.

Chants Communal.—A lyric prelude of wonderful harmonies opens the vista of love's dreamland beyond the unknown seas. This is followed by the poem "Optimos" (the nucleus of the later book of the same title), Traubel's key-poem wherein he expresses some of the fundamental principles of his philosophy: the apparent duality of life is in reality a unit. Good and evil in man and nature are relative phenomena, not absolute facts. Man is a part of every-

[8] Reinhart Piper & Co., Publishers, Munich.

[9] *Whitman and Traubel.* New York, Albert and Charles Boni, 1916.

[10] *Horace Traubel,* by David Karsner. New York, Egmont Arens, 1919. This last monograph did not reach me until after my manuscript was completed.

thing, finding his own identity again and again in varying forms. The consummation of all individual and collective life will surely be attained in the future when everything imperfect will be restored to its state of perfection. This faith and promise is the poet's message.

The main body of the book consists of forty "chants" which fall into two groups equal in number. The first group opens with a plea for justice: "Forever first of all is justice"; the second with a plea for love: "The heart of the matter is heart." But love and justice are only two different words for the same idea. Justice without love may be legally correct but it cannot be just. Love, real love which has the welfare of both individual and mankind at heart, cannot help being just. The first group of "Chants" deals primarily with a number of specific problems of modern society, a critique of our whole so-called civilization rising in the background. In the second group the perspective is reversed. Civilization at large with its basic principles is the main issue while individual man appears in his active and passive relations to the general problems. A few brief poems between the two groups and at the close of the second, corresponding to the lyrical prelude as interludes and postlude respectively, crystallize the varying moods of hope, questioning, and faith. The structural beauty of this arrangement is characteristic of Traubel's genius which unites reason with instinct, logic with intuition.

Better than Whitman did Traubel understand what was wrong with modern society. Endowed with a keenness of perception far superior to Whitman's emotional impressiveness, encouraged by a wise father to think for himself, he even as a boy succeeded in seeing through the bewildering symptoms on the surface of life to the ultimate causes. He shared with Whitman an optimistic belief that the power of love will eventually right all wrongs, creating a new order out of the existing chaos of anarchic selfishness. But he did not, as Whitman did, stop short at vague hopes or ill-founded theories. He wished to have things done in a practical way. He did not wait for others to act. He acted himself by giving every drop of blood in his veins to the cause of humanity; and he spurred others on to do likewise. *There is no early or late*—if you know the truth, say it now; if you know what must be done, do it now. *The boy comes along*—it is the eternally youthful in man that fights for the ideal. This fight is not born of hate but of love; "only love is fight." Labor fighting for its own rights fights at the same time for the rights of its present masters. Lin-

coln's word that the country cannot be half slave and half free, finds its application to the slave problem of our own time. The law of love, so Traubel puts it, is not a law for a parish only. It is a law for the whole world. It is a law. It is order. Labor's fight does not destroy; it builds up. Our present system of inequity, selfish greed, individual privileges, is chaotic anarchy, not order. Order will come when all have an equal share of what belongs to all.

The trend of evolution inevitably leads to the ideal. While the masses of the people instinctively march toward the goal, it is conscious unity and solidarity of interests that makes possible the final triumph of justice: *Of many voices one voice.* On the other hand, Traubel cannot insist too strongly on his demand that every single individual bear his full share of responsibility. A considerable number of "Chants" press this point, their very titles suggesting different lines of approach to the same subject: "The men who cry and keep on"; "What is the use?"; "There is no escape"; "Swear that you will call out loud"; "Will you be ready?"; "I want to be counted."

In a trenchantly sarcastic allegory appears the incarnation of the source of evil: "Said the Master of Men." Since time immemorial it has been he, the Great One, the omnipresent and omnipotent God Mammon, whose throne remained unshaken by revolutions and wars, whose power has been nourished by the blood of his victims and by the stupidity of his servants. "When my integrity is threatened by some minority of the people themselves I do not need to lift a hand in my own defense. The people do it all. They defend me. They are only too glad to demonstrate their loyalty. When rebellion rebels I simply hold my peace and my usufruct and smile. Thousands of people will die in order that I may live. The clay of this world may redden with carnage. But none of my blood is drawn. When the battle is over I reappear and receive the homage that attaches to my sacred prerogative. I who am interest. I who am rent. I who am profit." Did Mark Twain in his *The Mysterious Stranger* think of Traubel's chant? Is there any connection between "The Master of Men" and Moody's *The Brute*?

It is not often that Traubel finds so plastic and so objective an expression for his ideas. Only one other chant, in content the greatest contrast to it, resembles "The Master of Men" in form. It is "The Blood of the Martyrs." The motif evidently was suggested by the excavations in New York for the subway. The world admires and honors the soldier for his bravery in battle. It despises

or ignores the worker although he gives up his life in a "battle fought on a fair level of human enterprise." "You turn round to Broadway, meet a battalion of soldiers, and you become alive with the fire of martial exaltation"; but the victims of the perils of labor "are carried up from underground caverns and to their homes in the shadow of a dreadful popular unconcern." And the end of it all is this, "that the soldier's family reports at the treasury. The laborer's family reports at the poorhouse." Is it not true that all self-sacrifice for others is morally on the same plane? Can we not see the cross in the tunnel? "He died humbly, crushed underneath a rock. They have brought him out of the ground. His face is pale but satisfied. Your city of millions will not stay in its heavy round to regard his anonymous visage. Yet this unknown man has saved your city. But for him your city could not exist. All labor lies there prostrate in his inert form. Come out of your churches, all of you, and worship here. Leave your creeds behind. This is creed enough. Worship here. Here is religion enough."

In spite of all setbacks and defeats the cause is bound to prevail, if only each of us keeps on doing his duty. "If justice is impossible" life itself is impossible. "What have you got to do with the impossible anyway?....Is life possible? Very well, then justice is possible. For justice is life. Justice is immortality." A truly indomitable faith that puts to shame many an orthodox Christian. Still, the question may be raised if our idealist does not allow his enthusiasm to carry him too far, beyond his usual solid ground, when he tries to prove what he believes to be true by another thing he believes to be true, while either is true only by grace of his own personal belief. Traubel with his monistic philosophy differing in principle from the transcendentalism of Whitman, now and then approaches the latter's *a priori* conceptions and deductive method. But such inconsistencies are exceedingly rare. They may be explained by reminiscences of Whitman, by the influences of casual moods, or by an inherited predilection for hyper-logical debate.

Within the second half of the *Chants* there is included a powerful trilogy on "Civilization." *The air is close*: Civilization is sick for lack of fresh air, i. e., liberty, love, and justice. All the quack medicines administered to it will not cure. The doctors have been men like Roosevelt, have been Sunday-schools and the palliating sciences. The disease is too deeply rooted to yield to half measures. A storm is necessary to clear away obstructing débris and to open the sources of life; to make "room for ideas to move about. Room for love to find itself"; and room for justice. *The storm*

breaks; it upsets the artificial barriers of pseudo-rights and sham values; it creates order out of chaos; it safeguards the supreme law of equity. *Clear weather again*: "The crisis was met. Man proved equal to it." A new world and a new life in it have come. For now that everything is safe, every human being is safe. "Nothing has been lost that we cannot afford to lose. What we have gained is the one treasure to which all other treasures must converge or be worthless. We have gained the chance to live. We betrayed ourselves to property. And property betrayed us to despair. Now we have seen that the man of millions with no chance to live was poor. That the man without a cent with a chance to live is rich. And now that the storm has cleared we see that the social order never had but one task. The task to give people a chance to live."

Impossible—that chance will never come, says the pessimist. The optimist replies: it will come, *When you decide to have it done.* The social paradise is not *Way off somewhere.* It is here, among us, at the present moment, if the people, if you will it. "Do not go to justice saying: The time will come. Go to justice saying: The time is here. Do not go to justice saying: A man will come to serve. Go to justice saying: I am here to serve." The social paradise is not founded upon the equal distribution of material property. The spirit of equity, justice, and love once prevailing, the things material will take care of themselves. Man will see that life is not a fight for property and power; that only one thing is his own, love.

It is at this point that Traubel finally puts his finger on the sorest spot in the diseased body of the "civilization" of to-day. Created by a minority of masters, it never "has encouraged manhood in men." *What men might be* "if they were allowed to be men no arithmetician could figure and no moralist could guess." The "chance to live," the subject of previous chants, does not mean the chance to acquire physical power; it means the chance for the individual to develop fully his moral character in the service of mankind.

Whitman's conception of the divine average was based upon his trust in the average human nature as he observed it. Nietzsche's aristocratic "superman" and Traubel's democratic "man" are potentialities dependent upon the evolution and environment. The last chant, "And it all amounts to this," sums up all the evils of civilization in a final reckoning. But faith in the future triumphs. Like Nietzsche's, Traubel's affirmation of life does not result from a

superficial and therefore self-deceiving optimism but from a fearless recognition and a compassionate realization of evil as a necessary stage of transition to a better world. "This is the moment of the lapse of eras of force in eras of love, this is the bridgeroad, this is the mysterious archway of the rainbow, this is the darkest shadow meeting the brightest light: The worst comes before the best comes." With this vision of hope the book of *Chants Communal* closes as it began with a vista of love's dreamland.

Collects, which appeared in 1914 as number one of the second volume of *The Glebe*,[11] is a continuation of the *Chants*. Including the protest against the *Writers who are trying to write* already quoted, there are eight pieces with short poems in the *Optimos* technique interspersed. The themes of love, individual and collective responsibility, the sacrifice of labor, courageous affirmation of life, are augmented by woman's emancipation: "Pankhurst," and equality of races and nations: "What is the color of your skin?" The new chants are as vigorous, stimulating, and convincing as the older ones. But the tone is sharper; the style, so it seems to me, not of the uniformly high quality that characterized every poem in the previous collection. Is it because the substance of *Collects* bears still more directly upon the concrete facts of the day than did the *Chants*? because the author in the many years of continuous struggle had lost some of his tolerant patience? I do not know. Be it as it may, at least two of the *Collects* come up to the standard of the best *Chants*: "I'm so glad I was born" and "Keep your face to the sun." Especially the latter has something of the liberating force of a Beethoven symphony.

There is nothing easier for the general reader who comes from his favorite newspaper, or for the academic critic who comes from his favorite classical authority, than to find fault with works like *Chants Communal* and *Collects*. Are they to be classified as prose, rhythmical prose, free verse, or poetry? Do they fit in anywhere? Troublesome questions for any one accustomed to think of literature as a museum of tabulated and alphabetically shelved specimens or as a card catalog of titles. Traubel himself certainly did not know, nor did he care whether or not others knew. Both works, like *Optimos*, were not literature to him but manifestations of life, of his individual life in the service of the common people. And who dares deny that they are life? Whose conscience is not aroused by so earnest a call for justice; whose heart is not moved by so fervent an appeal to love? The *Chants* and *Optimos* have aptly been called labor

[11] New York, Albert and Charles Boni.

bibles. *Chants Communal* is indeed permeated with the spirit of the Preacher on the Mount and it touches upon almost every phase of the all-important problem of our time. It reveals the fearful tragedy in the contrast between capitalism and pauperism; it diagnoses the internal disease of our pseudo-civilization; it destroys conventions and builds the foundations for a new order. If Traubel's faith in the ultimate victory of justice and love is wrong; if his conception of a social paradise on earth is utopian; if the few blind men of the "peace council" have given the lie to his dreams; if the world has once more been deceived: are we to cast aside Traubel's work on that account? Is he, the seer, greater or smaller for it? Infinitely greater, I think, if the words of Christ, whom our time has again scorned, defiled, and crucified, have any meaning at all: "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God."

[TO BE CONCLUDED.]