

WALT WHITMAN SURPRISED.

PRESENTED BY MANY FRIENDS WITH A HANDSOME HORSE AND PHAETON.

PHILADELPHIA, Sept. 15.—Toward sun-down this evening, as Walt Whitman was half-dozing over a pile of manuscript near a window in his little frame house in Camden, the jarring rattle of wheels startled the old man, and a smart chestnut horse drew a natty phaeton up to the door. The poet glanced over his flowers at the turnout and nodded kindly to the little chap who held the reins, for he was a favorite, the son of his old friend, Tom Donaldson. The boy carefully tied the animal and handed up with a mysterious air a portentous envelope, big and fat, and started to walk away, but was called back and induced to enter the cozy workshop.

"What's all this about, my boy?" inquired Walt Whitman, turning over the missive, and handling it very much as if he feared it might contain dynamite.

"Them's the documents," piped the little fellow, in a childish treble.

"What documents? A commission from some foreign Court?" returned the old gentleman playfully, as he held the envelope up to the light and fruitlessly attempted to peer through the cover into the contents. "Is it a patent of nobility, or is it an address from a lot of my young friends?"

"Why don't you open it?" suggested the somewhat matter-of-fact emissary, who was on pins and needles through the consciousness of the possession of a huge secret many sizes too big for so small a custodian.

It seemed a long time that the poet consumed in adjusting his glasses and scanning the chirography of the superscription, and whole eras winged their way into eternity while he deliberately and nicely cut open the end and extracted the contents. Several large sheets of paper were folded up within. On them were scrawled the names of a number of prominent men in the various walks of life, but not a line to explain their significance save "Walt Whitman, with compliments of—" which was written at the top of the first page.

The old poet turned the sheets upside down and looked on the backs of them, while his forehead wrinkled with perplexity. He took off his glasses and polished them with his silk handkerchief, but their increased translucence did not augment their power of unraveling the mystery. In utter astonishment he turned to the boy, whom he began to suspect of joking with him, but that young man, who had been writhing under the effects of volcanic emotions, sprang to his feet, dashed out of the door, yelling wildly:

"Its yours—all yours—yours for keeps!" and disappeared.

"God bless us, Mary," gasped the old gentleman, as his good housekeeper appeared, with consternation written all over her features. "There's something the matter with the boy."

At this moment Mr. Donaldson walked in and grasped his old friend by the hand.

"What does it mean?" the poet demanded.

"The horse and phaeton are a present from your friends, whose names are on the paper," was the laughing reply.

But Walt Whitman could not grasp the idea that he was the recipient of so valuable a present. "Don't joke me," he pleaded; "I never owned such a thing in my life."

It took some time to convince him that the present was for him, and then he put on his wide-brimmed sombrero and insisted upon getting into the phaeton and dashing out into the green lanes. Mr. Donaldson accompanied him, and after a three-mile drive the poet let him out and drove to his old friend, Henry S. Scovel, and insisted that Mrs. Scovel ride out behind the wonderful animal.

It was long after dark before the poet consented to return to his home, and when a reporter called at 9 o'clock; the old gentleman was tagged. He was sitting in his great arm-chair beside the window, with the lights turned down. The floor and table were still littered with books and papers, and the evening mail was still unopened.

"You don't know how many good friends I have," said the bard, as he half rose to extend his hand. Then running his fingers through his silver locks, and rolling back his wide collar still further from his throat, he continued:

"I have before now been made to feel in many touching ways how kind and thoughtful my loving friends are, but this present is so handsome and valuable, came so opportunely, and was so thorough a surprise, that I can hardly realize it. My paralysis has made me so lame lately that I had to give up even my walks for health let alone my rambles in the country, and my constitution has suffered for exercise. It was all done so unostentatiously and delicately that I was greatly affected. Tom Donaldson knew that I was getting more feeble, and he wrote to a number of friends and admirers of mine in different parts of the country, proposing presenting me with a carriage and horse to ease my declining years. Some of them I do not know. Some are very dear friends. Here are their names: John G. Whittier, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Samuel L. Clemens, (Mark Twain,) Charles Dudley Warner, John Boyle O'Reilly, William J. Florence, Edwin Booth, and Lawrence Barrett, Mrs. S. A. Bigelow, of Boston; Horace Howard Furness, L. N. Fairchild, E. A. Buck, of the *Spirit of the Times*; R. W. Gilder, of the *Century*; Edward T. Steel, A. K. McClure, Stephen B. Elkins, Charles Emory Smith, Talcott Williams, William D. O'Connor, of Washington; J. H. Bartlett, George H. Boker, Edwin S. Stuart, William W. Justice, John Harker, of Exina, Canada, and R. M. Buck, M. D., and Dr. Beeman, of London, Canada.

"It is an interesting list, isn't it?" the poet continued. "It seems that this phaeton was made for me in Columbus, Ohio, and is as easy and convenient as it can be. It is very low in the bed, has gig lamps, and deep cushions. Oh, I shall have a famous time this Fall! They tell me there are lovely drives south and east of Camden, and there are sleepy old villages that I am informed are very like old English hamlets. I shall take long drives into the country each day, and once more enjoy nature, if not as I used to, at least as deeply and thankfully."

It is not generally known that the poet was recently in receipt of a considerable sum raised among his English admirers by subscription and without his knowledge. The gift is said to be about \$500 in value, and it was very welcome, coming as it did, when Walt Whitman was in financial embarrassment.