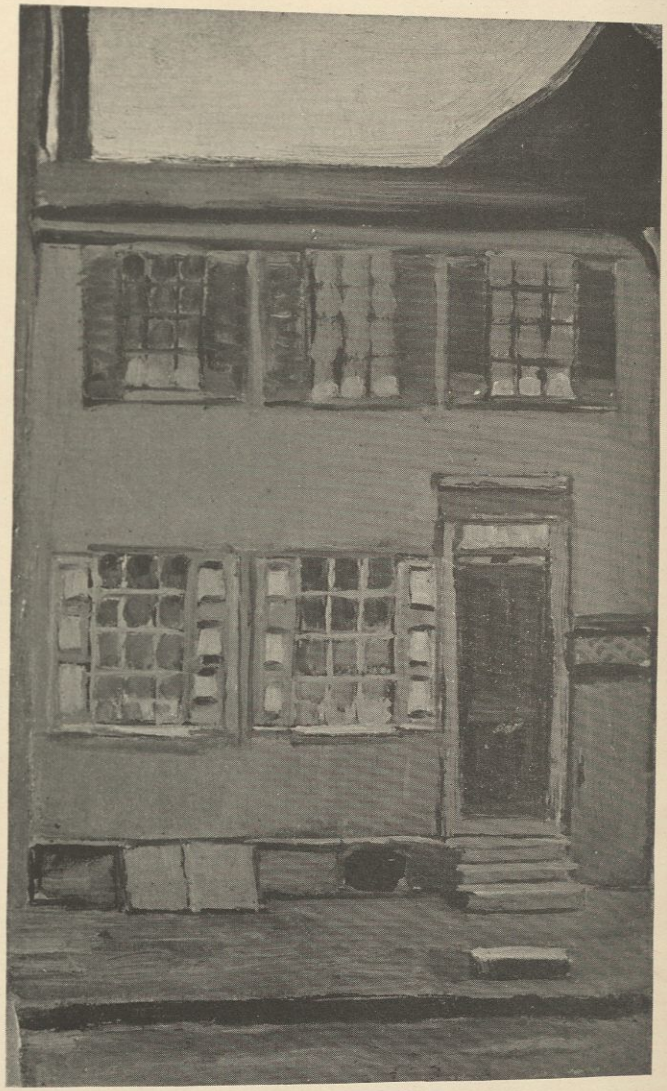
WALT WHITMAN IN MICKLE STREET

"There's this little street and this little house"
EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY



328 MICKLE STREET

FROM A PAINTING [1908] BY MARSDEN HARTLEY

WALT WHITMAN IN MICKLE STREET

ELIZABETH LEAVITT KELLER

NEW YORK
MITCHELL KENNERLEY
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EDITOR'S NOTE

ELIZABETH LEAVITT KELLER was born at Buffalo, N. Y., on November 3, 1839. Both her parents were descended from the first settlers of this country, and each in turn came to Buffalo in its early days, her mother, Sarah Ellis, by private conveyance in 1825, and her father, James S. Leavitt, by way of the newly opened Erie Canal in 1834.

Elizabeth was the second daughter. In the spring of 1841 she was taken to Niagara Falls, and all her childhood recollections are clustered around that place. Returning to Buffalo in 1846, her father opened a bookbindery, and later added a printing office and stationery store.

At nineteen years of age Elizabeth Leavitt was married to William Wallace Keller, of Little Falls, N. Y. Seven years later she became a widow.

Her natural instinct for nursing was developed during the Civil War and the years that followed, but the time and opportunity

PREFACE

HAD it ever occurred to me that the time might come when I should feel impelled to write something in regard to my late patient, Walt Whitman, I should have taken care to be better prepared in anticipation; would have kept a personal account, jotted down notes for my own use, observed his visitors more closely, preserved all my correspondence with Dr. Bucke, and recorded items of more or less interest that fade from memory as the years go by. Still, I have my diary, fortunately, and can be true to dates.

After I had been interviewed a number of times, and had answered various questions to the best of my knowledge and belief, I was surprised to see several high-flown articles published, all based on the meagre information I had furnished, and all imperfect and unsatisfactory.

Interviewers seemed to look for something beyond me; to wait expectantly in the hope that I could recall some unusual thing

in Mr. Whitman's eccentricities that I alone had observed; words that I alone had heard him speak; opinions and beliefs I alone had heard him express; anything remarkable, not before given to the public. They wanted the sensational and exclusive, if possible. I suppose that was natural.

But it set me thinking that if my knowledge was of any value or interest to others, why not write a truthful story myself, instead of having my words enlarged upon, changed and perverted? Simple facts are surely better than hasty exaggerations.

I have done what I could. One gentleman (*Mr. James M. Johnston, of Buffalo*), who has read the manuscript, and for whose opinion I have the greatest regard, remarked as he returned it: "It appears to me that your main view in writing this was to exonerate Mrs. Davis."

He had discovered a fact I then recognized to be the truth.

My greatest fear is that I may have handled the whole truth too freely—without gloves.

E. L. K.

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