

## THE ENGLISH REVIEW

enough native sense to shirk the soulless ritual of it so far as might be, and its bad influence has been corrected by years of wandering in the wilds. How the "scholar" can pretend to admire Whitman one can only explain by theories highly discreditable to the scholar. But, however we may despise the scholar, there are yet natural laws of rhythm. I do not argue that we know them all; on the contrary, I expect every new artist to declare new laws. But I deny that Whitman did so.

As an artist, he appears to me incomparably deficient. There is not one line whose music is retained by memory; I simply fail to understand the people who talk of his "subtle rhythm." I am deaf to it. And though his thought is so finely pantheistic, now and again, what point is there in the quotations from the catalogue of the Army and Navy Stores which make up three-quarters of his work? A great mind, perhaps; it seems to me as if that mind had been overwhelmed by the immensity of its material. He obtained such mystic rapture from every object that he could do nothing but scribble down its name!

He has been most praised, too, and has probably achieved most fame, by the perfectly gratuitous coarseness of his phrase whenever that phrase becomes articulate.

It is rather like Satan rebuking sin; but I think that the passage in *A Woman Waits for Me* ending with the words "accumulated within me" is revolting and beastly.

Quite right, someone will say, that pure beastliness should find expression; the point of view is as well worth recording as any other. Whitman has no doubt expressed the gross animal instinct which growls in man, and I think no man before Whitman ever consciously expressed it to himself. But is it art? Is there any merit in this expression? Is there melody, or fitness of any kind, in it? Why is this more poetic than the remarks expressed in even simpler (and therefore better) language on the walls of our "Vespasiennes"?

What said Blake? "Everything that lives is holy"; "the lust of the goat is the Glory of God";—true as truth itself.

But "truth is beauty," too; and the truth of life is not beautiful like the truth of Art, because Art selects the essential truth, the truth that is common to all, the "thing-