

**IN MEMORY OF ROBERT C.
WINTHROP, BEFORE THE CHICAGO
LITERARY CLUB, NOVEMBER 26, 1888
AND THE CHICAGO HISTORICAL
SOCIETY, NOVEMBER 20, 1894**

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In Memory of Robert C. Winthrop, before the Chicago literary club, November 26, 1888 and
the Chicago historical society, November 20, 1894 by Daniel Goodwin

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DANIEL GOODWIN

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ROBERT C. WINTHROP.

I. K. Pond
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INTRODUCTION.

The first thought which occurred to me when I learned of the death of Robert C. Winthrop was the great Eulogist has surrendered, and all the scholars of the English and French speaking nations of the world owe his memory a return in kind.

Webster and Everett, Choate and Phillips were his rivals in popular oratory; Bancroft and Prescott, Ellis and Frothingham, Parkman and Motley were his rivals as historians; Story and Quincy, Holmes and Lowell, vied with him in graceful and courteous table talk and post-prandial eloquence: but I know of no record of any man who has had such opportunities and who has so perfectly satisfied the hopes and tender anxieties of relatives and friends in pronouncing fitting eulogies upon the great dead of America. Nor has he been the eulogist of Americans alone. Connected by blood with some of the noblest families in England he has, since 1847, been acquainted with the foremost men of Great Britain and France, and as President of the Massachusetts Historical Society and chief trustee of George Peabody he has told the story of most of the great men who have been gathered among the stars for the last fifty years.

The numerous societies, historical, religious and philanthropic, of which he was a member; the city of his birth and death; the congress of the country where he was once Speaker and Senator will, in due time and with proper ceremony, weave for him those laurel leaves which the Muse of history prepares for the great of earth. In the meantime I present to a few of my own friends the tribute I prepared for Mr. Winthrop in 1888 for the Chicago Literary Club, with the addition of an appendix illustrating possibly the man and his surroundings confident in the hope that they will appreciate them as the humble tribute of one who most highly honored his subject, and was grateful for his friendship.

If any of these pages shall drift from the "world's White City" to our Eastern seaboard, let it be remembered by those who may peruse them, that they are the spontaneous tribute of a western friend who is alone responsible for the choice of subjects considered, for the genealogical chart constructed entirely from material in our own Historical and Newberry Libraries and for the meagre glance at Mr. Winthrop's political career, which has been almost entirely ignored in deference to the warmth of sentiments felt by so many of his contemporaries and their successors.

The following Essay was read before the Chicago Literary Club on the 26th of November, 1888, Mr. James L. High, President; Mr. Henry S. Boutell, Secretary pro tem.

OUR SUPREME EULOGIST.

When Robert C. Winthrop, as president of the Massachusetts Historical Society, had pronounced his eulogy upon the memory of his associate, John Lothrop Motley, he called upon James Russell Lowell to follow him. Mr. Lowell began in language which has met my eye since my present subject was chosen, but which seemed to me very expressive and significant. He said, "Mr. President, you assign me a duty of whose danger you only are unconscious, in asking me to add anything to the words of one who by common consent is a master in the perilous oratory of commemoration."

Perilous and difficult indeed many of us have found it, and it may not be labor lost to occupy the hour assigned to us to-night in a brief study of the life, the works, the character and the style of that man who has been so by common consent, in the chief home of our literature and arts, denominated the master of eulogy.

Who of us has not been led into that perilous walk by some strong chord of sympathy or affection? Certainly no clergyman has ever escaped it, either as a duty or a choice, and rare indeed are the lawyers, or physicians, or artists, or men of business, or soldiers surviving from the tented

field who have not been called upon to record their admiration or their love for friends who have fallen before them and whose memories they were not willing to let die.

From the cradle of the human race—from the first green sod that covered the stricken and lifeless form of the first man to this hour, the world has been sounding and reverberating the eulogies of the dear departed. Poetry and music have given their perpetual offering; the flowers of the field and the garden have mutely expressed their sweet and tender remembrance; the orator and historian have with sonorous sentence and eloquent illustration recorded the virtues of the departed.

Most of these eulogies have passed away like the flowers over which they were spoken, their transient loveliness all gone with the occasion for which they grew; and when we have found a man whose speech is golden, whose words of eulogy have been set in the volumes of our permanent literature, and when we find that he has said the right things, at the fitting time and place, concerning more than a hundred of the uncrowned kings of thought, and literature, and statesmanship, covering more than half of this most wonderful of all the centuries since the world began, we may well pause and look a little into the sources and causes of such marked excellence, such countless endeavor, such perfect success.