

**A DISCOURSE ON THE LIFE, CHARACTER
AND WRITINGS OF GULIAN CROMMELIN
VERPLANCK: DELIVERED BEFORE THE
NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY, MAY
17TH, 1870, PP. 5-59**

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WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT

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ON THE
LIFE, CHARACTER AND WRITINGS
OF
GULIAN CROMMELIN VERPLANCK,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY,

MAY 17TH, 1870,

BY

WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT.

NEW YORK:
PRINTED FOR THE SOCIETY.
MDCCLXX.

At a special meeting of the New York Historical Society, held at Steinway Hall,
on Tuesday evening, May 17, 1870,

WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT delivered a discourse on the *Life, Character and
Writings of Cullian C. Verplanck*,

On its conclusion HUGH MAXWELL submitted the following resolution, which
was adopted unanimously:

Resolved, That the thanks of this Society be presented to Mr. BRYANT for his
eloquent and instructive discourse, delivered this evening, and that he be
requested to furnish a copy for publication,

Extract from the Minutes,

ANDREW WARNER,

Recording Secretary.

OFFICERS OF THE SOCIETY,

ELECTED JANUARY, 1870.

PRESIDENT,

THOMAS DE WITT, D. D.

FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT,

GULIAN C. VERPLANCK, LL. D.

SECOND VICE-PRESIDENT,

JOHN A. DIX, LL. D.

FOREIGN CORRESPONDING SECRETARY,

JOHN ROMEYN BRODHEAD, LL. D.

DOMESTIC CORRESPONDING SECRETARY,

WILLIAM J. HOPPIN.

RECORDING SECRETARY,

ANDREW WARNER.

TREASURER,

BENJAMIN H. FIELD.

LIBRARIAN,

GEORGE H. MOORE, LL. D.

THE life of him in honor of whose memory we are assembled, was prolonged to so late a period and to the last was so full of usefulness, that it almost seemed a permanent part of the organization and the active movement of society here. His departure has left a sad vacancy in the framework which he helped to uphold and adorn. It is as if one of the columns which support a massive building had been suddenly taken away ; the sight of the space which it once occupied troubles us, and the mind wearies itself in the unavailing wish to restore it to its place.

In what I am about to say, I shall put together some notices of the character, the writings, and the services of

this eminent man, but the portraiture which I shall draw will be but a miniature. To do it full justice a larger canvas would be required than the one I propose to take. He acted in so many important capacities; he was connected in so many ways with our literature, our legislation, our jurisprudence, our public education, and public charities, that it would require a volume adequately to set forth the obligations we owe to the exertion of his fine faculties for the general good.

Gulian Crommelin Verplanck was born in Wall street, in the city of New York, on the 6th of August, 1786. The house in which he was born was a large yellow mansion, standing on the spot on which the Assay Office has since been built. A little beyond this street, a few rods only, lay the island of New York in all its original beauty, so that it was but a step from Wall street to the country. His father, Daniel Crommelin Verplanck, was a respectable citizen of the old stock of colonists from Holland, who for several terms was a member of Congress, and whom I remember as a short, stout old gentleman, commonly called Judge Verplanck, from having been in the latter years of his life a Judge of the County Court of Dutchess. Here he resided in the latter years of his life on the patrimonial estate, where the son, ever since I knew him, was always in the habit of passing a part of the summer. It had been in the family of the Verplancks ever since their

ancestor Gulian Verplanck with Francis Rombout, in 1683, purchased it, with other lands, of the Wappinger Indians for a certain amount of money and merchandize, specified in a deed signed by the Sachem Sakoraghuck and other chiefs, the spelling of whose names seems to defy pronunciation. The two purchasers afterwards divided this domain, and to the Verplancks was assigned a tract which they have ever since held.

This fine old estate has a long western border on the Hudson, and extends easterly for four or five miles to the village of Fishkill. About half a mile from the great river stands the family mansion, among its ancient groves, a large stone building of one story when I saw it; with a sharp roof and dormer windows, beside its old fashioned and well stocked garden. A winding path leads down to the river's edge, through an ancient forest which has stood there ever since Hendrick Hudson navigated the river bearing his name, and centuries before. This mansion was the country retreat of Mr. Verplanck ever since I knew him, and here it was that his grandfather on the paternal side, Samuel Verplanck, passed much of his time during our revolutionary war, in which, although he took no share in political measures, his inclinations were on the side of the mother country.

This Samuel Verplanck, by a custom which seems not to have become obsolete in his time, was betrothed when but seven years old to his cousin Judith Crommelin,