

**LIBERTY IN LITERATURE:  
TESTIMONIAL  
TO WALT WHITMAN**

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Liberty in Literature: Testimonial to Walt Whitman by Robert G. Ingersoll

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**ROBERT G. INGERSOLL**

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# LIBERTY IN LITERATURE.

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TESTIMONIAL

TO

WALT WHITMAN

BY

ROBERT G. INGERSOLL

AN ADDRESS DELIVERED IN PHILADELPHIA, OCT. 21, 1890

*"Let us put wreaths on the brows of the living"*

LONDON :

GAY & BIRD, American Book and Newspaper Agency,  
15, KING WILLIAM STREET, STRAND.

1891

TESTIMONIAL  
TO  
WALT WHITMAN.

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Of all the placid hours in his peaceful life, those that Walt Whitman spent on the stage of Horticultural Hall last night must have been among the most gratifying, says the *Philadelphia Press* of October 23, 1890. To a testimonial, intended to cheer his declining years, not only in a complimentary sense, came some eighteen hundred or more people to listen to a tribute to the aged poet by Col. Robert G. Ingersoll, such as seldom falls to the lot of living man to hear about himself.

On the stage sat many admirers of the venerable torch-bearer of modern poetic thought, as

Colonel Ingersoll described him, young and old, men and women. There were white beards, but none were so white as that of the author of "Leaves of Grass." He sat calm and sedate in his easy wheeled chair, with his usual garb of gray, with his cloudy white hair falling over his white, turned-down collar that must have been three inches wide. No burst of eloquence from the orator's lips disturbed that equanimity; no tribute of applause moved him from his habitual calm.

And when the lecturer, having concluded, said, "We have met to-night to honor ourselves by honoring the author of 'Leaves of Grass,'" and the audience started to leave the hall, the man they had honored reached forward with his cane and attracted Colonel Ingersoll's attention.

"Do not leave yet," said Colonel Ingersoll, "Mr. Whitman has a word to say."

This is what he said, and no more characteristic thing ever fell from the poet's lips or flowed from his pen;



"After all, my friends, the main factors being the curious testimony called personal presence and face to face meeting, I have come here to be among you and show myself, and thank you with my living voice for coming, and Robert Ingersoll for speaking. And so with such brief testimony of showing myself, and such good will and gratitude, I bid you hail and farewell."

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$$\frac{1}{x} = x^{-1} \quad \frac{1}{x^2} = x^{-2} \quad \frac{1}{x^3} = x^{-3}$$

$$\frac{1}{x^4} = x^{-4} \quad \frac{1}{x^5} = x^{-5} \quad \frac{1}{x^6} = x^{-6}$$

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## THE ADDRESS.

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*Let us Put Wreaths on the Brows of the Living.*

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## I.

In the year 1855 the American people knew but little of books. Their ideals, their models, were English. Young and Pollok, Addison and Watts were regarded as great poets. Some of the more reckless read Thomson's "Seasons" and the poems and novels of Sir Walter Scott. A few, not quite orthodox, delighted in the mechanical monotony of Pope, and the really wicked—those lost to all religious shame—were worshipers of Shakespeare. The really orthodox Protestant, untroubled by doubts, considered Milton the greatest poet of them all. Byron and Shelley were hardly respectable—not to be read by young persons. It was admitted