

**BRYANT AMONG HIS COUNTRYMEN,  
THE POET, THE PATRIOT, THE MAN:  
AN ORATION BEFORE THE GOETHE  
CLUB, WEDNESDAY EVENING,  
OCTOBER 30TH, 1878**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649295746

Bryant Among His Countrymen, the Poet, the Patriot, the Man: An Oration Before the Goethe Club, wednesday evening, october 30th, 1878 by Samuel Osgood

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

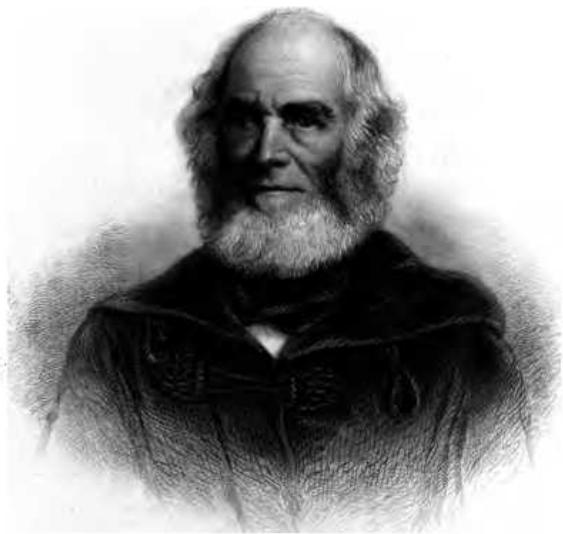
This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**SAMUEL OSGOOD**

**BRYANT AMONG HIS COUNTRYMEN,  
THE POET, THE PATRIOT, THE MAN:  
AN ORATION BEFORE THE GOETHE  
CLUB, WEDNESDAY EVENING,  
OCTOBER 30TH, 1878**





*William Cullen Bryant*

G. P. PUTNAM & Co. N.Y.

NEW YORK

1851

0

BRYANT AMONG HIS COUNTRYMEN

THE POET, THE PATRIOT, THE MAN

AN ORATION

BEFORE THE GOETHE CLUB

WEDNESDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 30TH, 1878

BY

SAMUEL OSGOOD, D. D., LL. D.

---

NEW YORK  
G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS  
152 FIFTH AVENUE  
1879

*Press of  
G. P. Putnam's Sons  
New York.*

BRYANT AMONG HIS COUNTRYMEN ;

THE POET, THE PATRIOT, THE MAN.

AN ORATION

BEFORE THE GOETHE CLUB,  
WEDNESDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 30, 1878,

BY SAMUEL OSGOOD, D. D., LL. D.

OUR loved and venerated friend, the illustrious poet, the patriarch of our American literature, went from us in June, the month in which he had wished to die in God's own time. Our whole people mourned. All who could enter crowded the church and joined tenderly and reverently in the fitting solemnities there. A few friends with the family followed the body to Roslyn and committed it to the ground among the trees and flowers, that had learned hymns from him. The leaves are falling there, the flowers are fading and dying in that forest cemetery. That is their nature and they have kept their sacred watch at the grave as long as they could. We are not to try to change that nature or to force the bloom of earth to put on the immortality of Paradise. We are concerned now with other growths of art and letters that do not die, and we do not meet now at the grave. Death is not here, but life. This is not a funeral, but rather a festal hour, not a mortuary, but a natal occasion, so near to the poet's birthday and so fittingly celebrated as the new birth of his fame, now that his country accepts him anew among her immortal sons, who have said their good word and done their great



work and gone to their rest. His spirit is with God, with whom are the souls of the faithful, and so in a serious and a sacred sense it is with us, in our fellowship with that communion of letters and humanity which belongs to the kingdom of God.

This Goethe Club, which is given to the higher literature under the greatest name in German poetry and which has received our venerable poet with its highest honors, justly calls you now to unite with them in this welcome of Bryant to his lasting place in his country and mankind.

In treating, as I am to try to do, of his hold upon his countrymen, I would do it in the most generous and comprehensive sense and look upon all who live with us as our people, and all of every land who love good letters and fine art as of our kindred. This was his feeling always, student, traveller, citizen of the world as he was, and we seem almost to see him among us with his white head and benign face and persuasive lips as when you so cordially received him; and he seems now to approve every hearty word for fraternity among men and peace between nations. American he was and yet none the less cosmopolitan. In fact, because truly American, he can more fully take and give our fellowship with all races. Here to-night Bryant receives honors from the countrymen of Goethe and the countrymen of Bryant rejoice in the homage and return it.

I. Bryant was first to take hold of his countrymen by taking hold of the country itself and by presenting our land, its scenery and growths in the charmed light of poetry. He first entered this America by the Gate Beautiful, and left it open to all who came after him. It is of course unwise to say that there was no poetic sentiment here before him, no earnest love of nature, for these belong to the civilized

human mind, and especially to the English or Anglo-German race which has lived here for two centuries and a half. There were lovers of scenery and makers of verse here from the beginning of our colonies, but it is quite remarkable that no classic poet appeared until he came, and that a Green Mountain Boy at eighteen years began American poetry with immortal verse.

The Pilgrims of the *May Flower* in 1620 might have brought with them hither the master-pieces of Spenser and Shakspeare from the mother country, and the Puritans of the *Arabella* in 1630 were under the lead of graduates of Old Cambridge, and some of them fellow-students there with Milton himself. When the Bryants came in an after-voyage of the *May Flower*, to the Old Colony about the year 1640, a year which Germans may well remember as the date of the accession of that Great Elector, Frederick William of Prussia, who started what we call Modern Germany, they left Milton in England at the age of thirty-two, author of "Comus," "Lycidas," "Il Penseroso" and "L'Allegro," just returning to London from the country to begin his political career, as our Bryant began his in New York, at about the same age, nearly two centuries afterward. Does it not seem as if the Bryant forefather, Stephen, must have brought with him some spark of that Milton's fire, and that it was kept smouldering on the family hearth, until it kindled into flame, when "Thanatopsis" sprang to life.

If we ask why so gifted a people as the New England race could live nearly two hundred years in this new and beautiful country without originating any enduring poetry, we may specify some reasons that lighten if they do not quite explain the difficulty. In the first place, it must be remembered that for a long time these people

had to struggle for very life, and that moreover when they conquered peace, and won comfort, they were bent on building up and extending civil order, reclaiming the wilderness, or planting their great domain with farms and homesteads and giving what in their eyes was beauty to the stern reality of life, instead of revelling in visions of the ideal. Again if they wanted poetry, they could import it from England in plenty and a much better article than any that their pedantic versifiers were likely to produce, and they could import it also in better shape and at lower prices than those of the domestic product.

But perhaps the dearth of native poetry in America may be quite as much explained by the fact that the dominant Puritan belief was unfriendly to such literature by its peculiar interpretation of the Bible as the only revelation from God and its contempt for nature and mankind as both fallen from God and incapable of giving light to the soul; whilst the dominant liberals who rejected this stern creed went for a time far wrong the other way and under the teachings of Locke and his school and of the French Materialists who came after him, they denied or ignored the intuitive and ideal faculties of man and were blind to the Spirit of God in nature and the world.

Yet the soul of poetry was in the race, and it was only a question of time, when it should speak out. There was evidently a kind of uniformity, a sameness in the thought and life of New England, that was not favorable to poetry and the new spirit could come only with some protest or antagonism. Sameness is death, and a certain difference always goes with vitality, whether in the bursting of a bud into flower, or the opening of an age into its ideas and arts. When poetry came, a new culture challenged the old the-