

**A FUNERAL ORATION,
OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF
THOMAS COLE, DELIVERED BEFORE
THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF
DESIGN, NEW-YORK, MAY 4, 1848**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649191970

A funeral oration, occasioned by the death of Thomas Cole, delivered before the National academy of design, New-York, May 4, 1848 by William Cullen Bryant

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

WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT

**A FUNERAL ORATION,
OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF
THOMAS COLE, DELIVERED BEFORE
THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF
DESIGN, NEW-YORK, MAY 4, 1848**

©

A

FUNERAL ORATION,

OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF

THOMAS COLE,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

NATIONAL ACADEMY OF DESIGN,

NEW-YORK, MAY 4, 1848.

BY

WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT.

Published by order of the Council of the Academy.

NEW-YORK:

D. APPLETON & COMPANY, 200 BROADWAY.

PHILADELPHIA:

GEO. S. APPLETON, 148 CHESNUT-STREET.

M DCCC XLVIII.

FUNERAL ORATION.

GENTLEMEN OF THE ACADEMY :

We who were not permitted to see our friend laid in his grave, and to pay his remains the last tokens of respect before they were for ever removed from our sight, are assembled to pass a few moments in speaking of his genius and his virtues. He was one of the founders of the Academy whose members I address, as well as one of its most illustrious ornaments. During the entire space which has elapsed since the first of its exhibitions, nearly a quarter of a century, I am not sure that there was a single year in which his works did not appear on its walls; to have missed them would have made us feel that the collection was incomplete. Yet we shall miss them hereafter; that skilful hand is at rest for ever. His departure has left a vacuity which amazes and alarms us. It is as if the voyager on the Hudson were to look toward the great range of the Catskills, at the

foot of which Cole, with a reverential fondness, had fixed his abode, and were to see that the grandest of its summits had disappeared, had sunk into the plain from our sight. I might use a bolder similitude; it is as if we were to look over the heavens on a starlight evening and find that one of the greater planets, Hesperus or Jupiter, had been blotted from the sky.

When the good who are not distinguished by any intellectual greatness die, we regard their end as something in the ordinary course of nature. A harmless life we say has closed; there is one fewer of the kindly spirits whom we were accustomed to meet in our path;—and save in the little circle of his nearest friends the sole feeling is that of a gentle regret. The child dies, and we think of it as a blossom transplanted to brighter gardens; another springs and blooms in its place; the youth and maiden depart in their early promise, the old man at the close of his tasks, and leave no space which is not soon filled. But when to great worth is united great genius, when the mind of their possessor is so blended with the public mind as to form much of its strength and grace, his removal by death, in the strength and activity of his faculties, affects us with a sense of violence and loss; we feel that the great fabric of which we form a part is convulsed and shattered by it. It is like wrench-

ing out by the roots the ivy which has overgrown and beautifies and upholds some ancient structure of the old world, and has sent its fibres deep within its masonry; the wall is left a shapeless mass of loosened stones.

* For Cole was not only a great artist but a great teacher; the contemplation of his works made men better. It is said of one of the old Italian painters that he never began a painting without first offering a prayer. The paintings of Cole are of that nature that it hardly transcends the proper use of language to call them acts of religion. Yet do they never strike us as strained or forced in character; they teach but what rose spontaneously in the mind of the artist; they were the sincere communications of his own moral and intellectual being. One of the most eminent among the modern German painters, Overbeck, is remarkable for the happiness with which he has caught the devotional manner of the old ecclesiastical painters, blending it with his own more exquisite knowledge of art, and shedding it over forms of fairer symmetry. Yet has he not escaped a certain mannerism; the air of submissive awe, the manifest consciousness of a superior presence, which he so invariably bestows on all his personages, becomes at last a matter of repetition and circumscribes his walk to a narrow circle. With Cole it was otherwise; his mode of treating his subjects was not bounded by the narrow limits of any

system ; the moral interest he gave them took no set form or predetermined pattern ; its manifestations wore the diversity of that creation from which they were drawn.

Let me ask those who hear me, to accompany me in a brief review of his life and his principal works.

Thomas Cole was born in the year 1802, at Bolton, in Lancashire, England. He came to this country with his family when sixteen years of age. He regarded himself, however, as an American, and claimed the United States as the country of his relatives. His father passed his youth here, and his grandfather, I have heard him say, lived the greater part of his life in the United States.

After a short stay in Philadelphia the family removed to Steubenville, in Ohio. Cole was early in the habit of amusing himself with drawing, observant of the aspect of nature and fond of remarking the varieties of scenery. An invincible diffidence led him to avoid society and to wander alone in woods and solitudes, where he found that serenity which forsook him in the company of his fellows. He took long rambles in the forests along the banks of the Ohio, on which Steubenville is situated, and acquired that love of walking which continued through life. His first drawings were imitated from the designs on English china ware ; he then copied engravings, and tried en-

graving, in a very rude way we must presume, both on wood and copper. In 1820 when the artist was eighteen years of age, a portrait painter named Stein, came to Steubenville, who lent him an English work on drawing, treating of design, composition and colour. The study of this work seems not only to have given him an idea of the principles of the art, but to have revealed to him in some sort the extraordinary powers that were slumbering within him. He read it again and again with the greatest eagerness; it became his constant companion and he resolved to be a painter. He provided himself with a palette, pencils and colours, and after one or two experiments in portrait painting, which were pronounced satisfactory, left his father's house on foot one February morning, on a tour through some of the principal villages of Ohio. From St. Clairsville, which he first reached, he wandered to Zanesville, from Zanesville to Chillicothe, and finally after an absence of several months, during which he painted but few pictures, and experienced many hardships and discouragements, returned to Steubenville no richer than when he left it. In one of these journeys, that from Zanesville to Chillicothe, he walked sixty miles in a single day.

The family afterwards removed to Pittsburgh, and here, on the banks of the Monongahela, in the year 1823, he first struck into the path which led

him to excellence and renown. The country about Pittsburgh is uncommonly beautiful, a region of hills and glens, rich meadows and noble forests, and charming combinations of wood and water, and great luxuriance and variety of vegetation. After the hour of nine in the morning, he was engaged in a manufactory established by his father, but until that time he was abroad, studying the aspect of the country, and for the first time making sketches from nature. Before the buds began to open, he drew the leafless trees, imitated the disposition of the boughs and twigs, and as the leaves came forth, studied and copied the various characters of foliage. I may date from this period the birth of his practical skill as a landscape painter, though I have little doubt that in his earlier wanderings on the banks of the Ohio, and perhaps in his still earlier rambles in the fields of Lancashire, he had cherished the close inspection of nature, and unconsciously laid up in his memory treasures of observation, from which he afterwards drew liberally, when long practice had given him the ready hand, and the power of throwing upon the canvass at pleasure the images that rose and lived in his mind. In no part of the world where painting is practised as an art, does the forest vegetation present so great a variety as here; and of that variety Cole seemed a perfect master. I see in his delinea-