

F 74

C, T3

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 014 013 451 A ●

Hollinger
pH 8.5
Mill Run F03-2193

POEM

AT THE CELEBRATION OF
THE TWO HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-FIFTH
ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING
OF CAMBRIDGE

SANDERS THEATRE, DEC. 21, 1905

BY
WILLIAM ROSCOE THAYER

[REPRINTED FROM PROCEEDINGS OF THE CAMBRIDGE
HISTORICAL SOCIETY, I]

2
4
3
12
•, 5

100
Cambridge Heb. Lib.
FEB 21 1916

31

F 74
CIT 3

G. E. D. Aug. 11, 1910.

POEM OF WILLIAM ROSCOE THAYER

CAMBRIDGE: 1630-1905.

I. THE FOUNDERS.

As when, amid the heats of prime,
We pause, and backward look on Youth,
Swift as a flash the sweet May time
Comes with its visions: again Truth,
The ideal, sets our hearts on fire,
Whispers *Renounce! Pursue! Desire!*
Still loveliest when she bids *Aspire!*
And in the recover'd bloom and glow
Of the enchanted Long Ago,
We count the gains our hands have wrought,
The knowledge that the years have taught,
And rate them dim and scant and few
Beside those visions that we knew
When all our world was dawn and dew.

So in thy haunts, beloved Town,
Thy Past will fling its challenge down
Like Youth's remember'd dream: it asks,
"How have ye sons fulfill'd your tasks?
The soil ye had — the seed — the way,
What harvest do ye reap to-day?"
And well it is that we give heed,
And test us by their word and deed.

The hearts they bred in Cambridge held
 The virtues of those days of eld :
 Narrow it may be, stern and grim,
 Yet bas'd on principle, not whim ;
 Lofty as hope and deep as faith,
 And stronger than the might of Death,
 And firm enough on which to build
 Town, state, or nation, as God will'd.
 Religion, learning, civic life,
 To drive, not drift — to be, not seem —
 At God's command to enter strife —
 These were their aims, few but supreme.

We, sapp'd by dubious modern ease,
 Pity the Founders on their knees ;
 Unmindful of the endless gain,
 We overstress the fleeting pain, —
 Their sighs for friends and pleasures left,
 Their fight with famine, cold and thirst,
 Mere fugitives, despis'd, bereft,
 Amid a wilderness accurst.
Bereft? Upon that forest hem
 Jehovah gave his sign to them !
 Along the lonely Charles they heard
 The Prophets speak Redemption's word !

Here David's loud hosannas rang,
 Here Calvin preached and Milton sang !
 For them the actual barren scene
 Was but a phantom Palestine —
 A stage where they were doom'd to play
 Sin's drama, in the Jewish way.
 The hosts of Heaven and hordes of Hell
 Watch'd ev'ry act of ev'ry soul,
 As if that single choice might knell
 Bliss or perdition for the whole.

God's gladiators, they would scorn
 Our pity, pitying us instead.
 Would deem us languid creatures, born
 Too late to know how heart and head
 In holy vehemence can wed ;

Too dull or passionless to feel
 Faith's perfect, incandescent zeal;
 Too blind to see the Lord on high
 Look down and judge humanity,
 As thro' a window in the sky.

II. THE INHERITANCE.

Such were the Founders when they planted here
 The home that we inherit, title clear.
 Not empire, loot nor commerce urged their quest,
 But the one reason, elemental, best,
 That man shall have untrammel'd ways to God,
 Which if he have not, man remains a clod.

This be their praise, thro' all the years to come —
 What was a wilderness they made a home,
 A home, the surest masterpiece of man!
 Statesmen may scheme and conquerors may plan,
 Their craft will fail, their legion'd power fade,
 Unless upon that rock their trust be laid.
 That is the cornerstone whereon mankind,
 Building tow'rds Heaven, have left the beast behind;
 Harm that, the beast returns. The Founders show'd
 How rudest hemlock huts could be the abode
 Of holy love that shunneth palaces —
 The shrine of life-long sweetest privacies —
 The altar to whose flame Self hourly brings
 Its joyful sacrifice — the sacred springs
 Of virtues and affections that control
 Our hearts thro' life, and keep them pure and whole.

Now thrice three generations testify
 The Founders builded well: we pass and die,
 But Cambridge keeps her glory as at first:
 Here men are neighbors; here are nurst
 Clean hearts, clear heads and wills inviolate.
 Spurr'd by this migrant age men gad and roam,
 Here let them learn the meaning of a home,
 Bohemians, nomads never rear'd a state.

On this, our heart-free Feast of Gratitude,
 Unto the Past be all our thanks renewed :
 First, to the Founders ; next, to ev'ry son
 Who by his shining work or nature won
 A nobler living for the common share :
 Poets who prov'd that the diviner air
 Of Poesy is here ; the patriots true

Who with their conscience kept strict rendezvous ;
 Citizens, scholars, preachers — all who gave
 Their souls for service — best, the women brave.
 And we rejoice that many issues vast
 Have touch'd our life, that here have pass'd
 Events that shook the world ; and dear we hold,
 In pride and satisfactions manifold,
 The College, eldest daughter of the Town,
 Harvard, who sheds on Cambridge her renown.
 Nations are wreck'd, and empires melt away ;
 Creeds rise and vanish ; customs last their day ;
 Change seems the end of all ; Time's current sweeps
 Resistless, roaring, tow'rds the unknown deeps :
 But like an island in the rapids set
 The College stands ; in vain the waters fret
 Around her precinct consecrate to Truth ;
 She has the strength of ages and the youth
 Of wisdom ; free from sordid interest,
 Her mission is to know and teach the best —
 Not what men wish to hear, but what is true —
 To guard the old, to greet and search the new.

O, rare our lot, and wonder-rich the dower
 The Fates beyond desert upon us shower !
 With gratitude, the coin of noble hearts,
 Here would we honor those who made our parts
 So pleasant — nameless benefactors gone,
 Who truly liv'd, not to themselves alone.

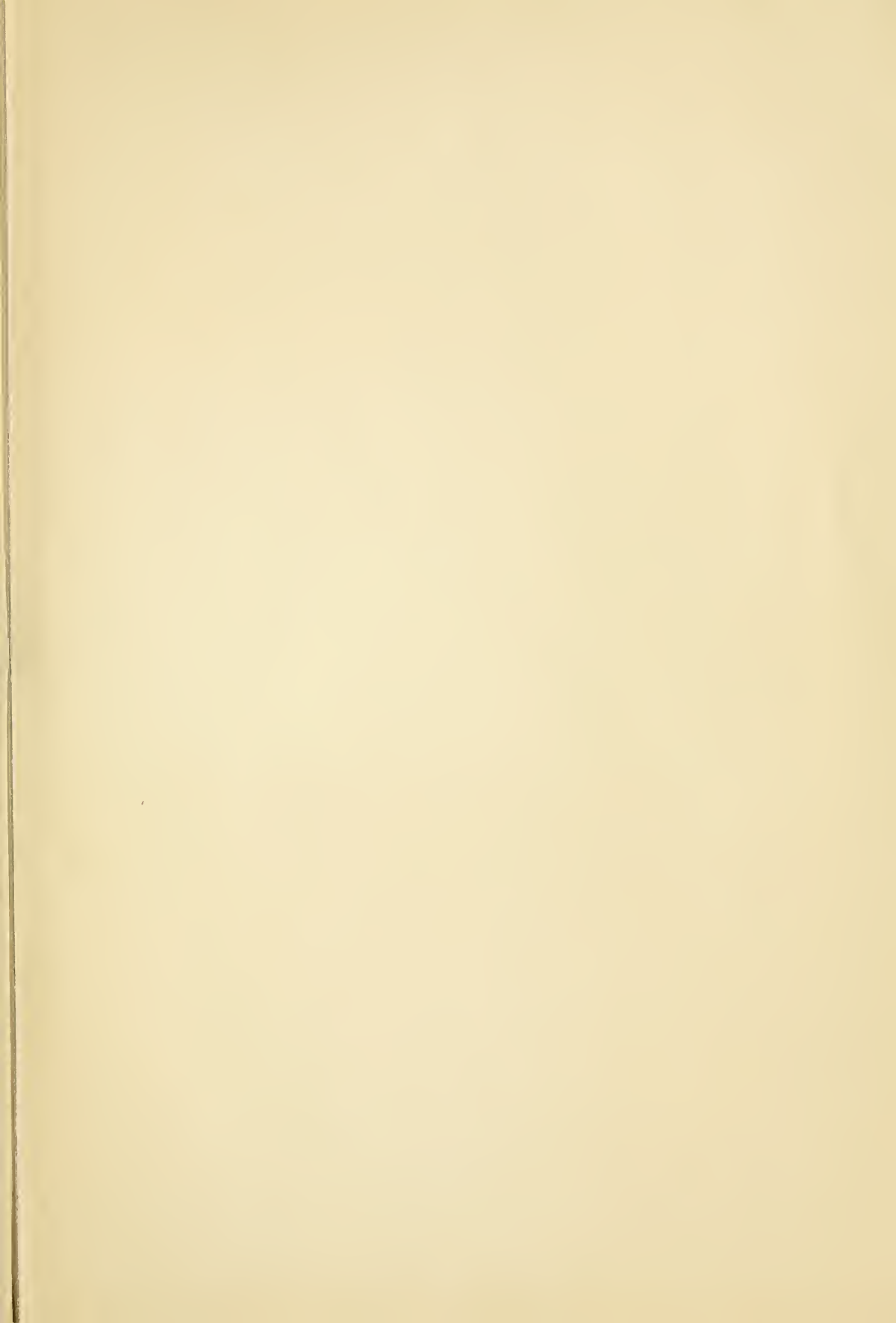
III. OUR COVENANT.

The Past brings its gifts, and we take, for we may not refuse ;
 Or bitter or sweet, they have fallen unearn'd to our lot ;
 The bitter to be as a cordial draught, if we choose,

The sweet to be sweeter for sharing with them that have not,
But woe unto them that would make but a brag of the Past,
Accepting its gifts like a hoard they have license to spend;
Untrue to their promise, the hopes of the race they would blast;
A mock to the wise they shall live, and in shame they shall end.
But he that awakes to a hallowing sense of the due
We owe to our brothers and helpers that wrought and are dead —
The builders of states that were free, the sages that knew,
The prophets that boldly bore witness, the martyrs that bled,
And they who bring joy without blemish, magicians of Art,
Revealers of Beauty and Love, that impassion the soul —
He thrills with the rush of a torrent of thanks in his heart,
But blushes that he, the unworthy, inherits the whole.
So much, overmuch! to receive from the givers unknown,
Now sunk out of Time beyond reach of his gratitude's call!
They taught him the Knowledge supreme, and he turns to his own,
To pay in his service to them what he owes unto all.

Ah, little avails it to garland the Past of our Town,
If pride be not chasten'd by thought of the duties unpaid:
The trust that the Fathers in piety handed us down
Have we loyally guarded, unharm'd, or diminish'd, betray'd?
Religion they gave — do we cherish the things that endure?
Do we estimate learning more precious than comfort or gold?
Has self left the citizen single in purpose and pure?
And over our prosperous homes breathes the spirit of old?
Not merely to guard unimpair'd is enough, but to add —
Since treasure of character surely must dwindle, or grow —
To add of our own, of our best, to uplift and make glad
The hearts of our Kin in that future we never shall know.
And this we resolve: we will mingle our more to the less —
The Past thro' our wills as a far-shedding glory shall shine —
Dear Town, that hast blest us as only a mother can bless,
We pledge thee anew our devotion! Our best shall be thine!









LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

0 014 013 451 A