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BRYANT AND THOREAU



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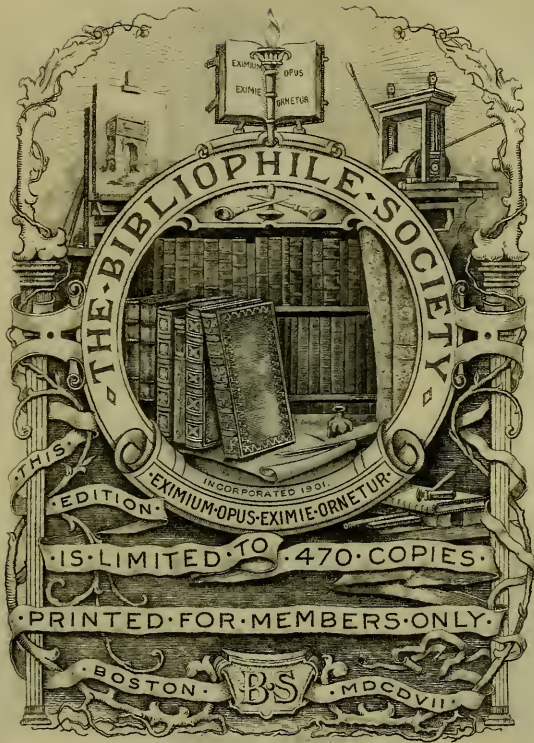
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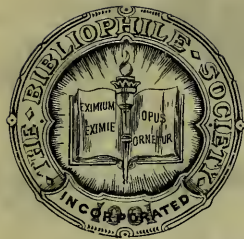
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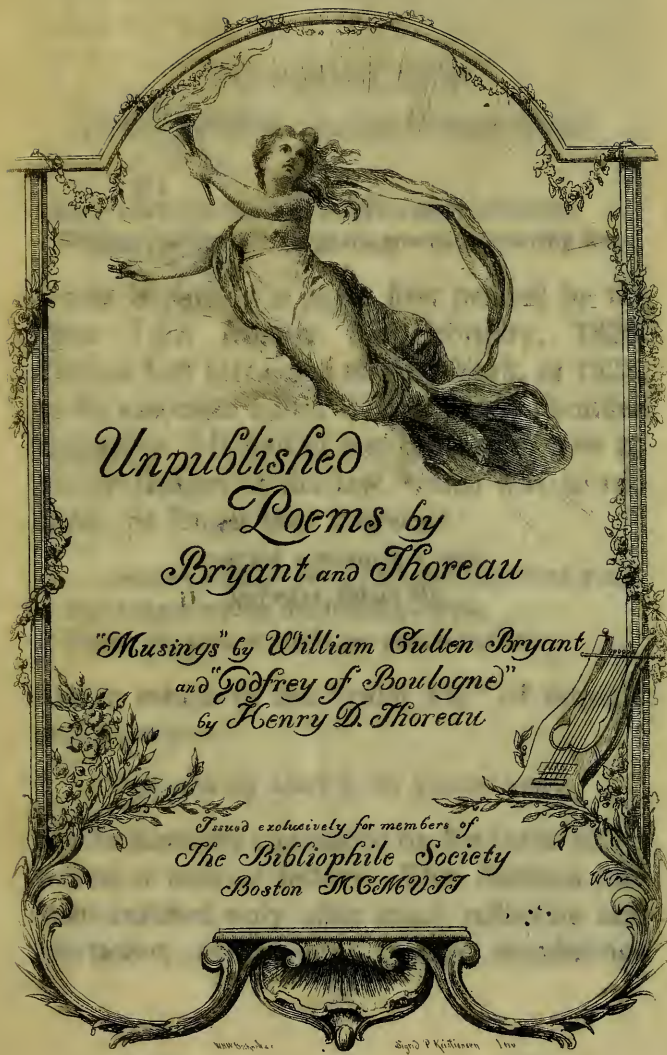


BRYANT AND THOREAU









*Unpublished
Poems by
Bryant and Thoreau*

*"Musings" by William Cullen Bryant
and "Godfrey of Boulogne"
by Henry D. Thoreau*

*Issued exclusively for members of
The Bibliophile Society
Boston MCMVII*

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INTRODUCTION

BY PROFESSOR CURTIS HIDDEN PAGE

Deep were my musings in life's early blossom
'Mid the twilight of mountain-groves wandering long,

wrote Bryant in a poem first printed by the *New York Review* for February, 1826. Bryant had just come to New York, in 1825, to be associate editor of this newly founded magazine. He had at last decided to give up his profession of the law, which was so irksome; no longer to

. . . scrawl strange words with the barbarous pen,
And mingle among the jostling crowd,
Where the sons of strife are subtle and loud,

but to return to the "calm life" of thought and poetry—

That won my heart in my greener years,
and to have the courage to be, for better or for worse, a man of letters. This decision had been reached only after much reflection and hesitation, after many nightly wanderings

among the mountain-woods of Great Barrington,—after long musings under the stars. He was twenty-four or twenty-five when he thus spoke of his “greener years” as already belonging to the distant past—a mood that need not surprise us in the young man who had written *Thanatopsis* at the age of sixteen or seventeen; and he was thirty when he finally came to this decision, which marked the turning-point in his life.

These deciding years were also the most fruitful, in poetic production, of all his life. From 1824 to 1826 he wrote more than twice as many poems as in any other three years; and among these poems are many of his most characteristic and best, such as *Autumn Woods*, *The Lapse of Time*, *Mutation*, *Monument Mountain*, *November*, *A Forest Hymn*, *The Death of the Flowers*, “I cannot forget with what fervid devotion,” *The New Moon*, *The Journey of Life*, and *October*; and especially several poems of the stars, including *The Hymn to the North Star*, *The Song of the Stars*, *The Firmament*, and *The Conjunction of Jupiter and Venus*. Yet it is probable that not half the poems written during these years are preserved. Bryant was al-

ways the sternest critic of his own writings. Of a series of three odes, written a few years earlier, he has included only one in his works. Of the many poems written for Miss Fairchild, before she became Mrs. Bryant, we have but one—"O Fairest of the rural maids." So it may well be that in choosing for publication only what he considered his best, he rejected, in this important period, many characteristic poems which, in view of the small total amount of his work, we can ill afford to lose. *Musings* would seem to be one of these. Though in the case of Bryant it is particularly difficult to judge of dates by internal evidence—so little did his thought and style change from the beginning to the end of his work, from *Thanatopsis* to *The Flood of Years*—yet I feel almost safe in assigning our poem to the year 1825; the more so since it is a poem of Autumn, and since the comet of Encke, which he speaks of in the poem and names in his note, was visible in September and October of that year.

In any case, *Musings* is thoroughly characteristic of Bryant. No one but he, in the early part of the nineteenth century in America, could have written the beautiful lines—

. . . Was breathing incense o'er the pall
Of the shrouded earth: and dark and tall . . .
Stood up the gray old trees.

He speaks again of "tall gray trees" in *The Firmament*, written at Great Barrington in 1825. We find "tall and dark," again ending a line, in the *Forest Hymn*, also written in 1825.

Indeed, Bryant seems to have realized that he had a tendency to overwork these too easily coupled adjectives; for in *Monument Mountain* he later changed his original reading of 1824, "these gray old rocks," to "these reverend rocks." Nowhere has he used the phrase more effectively than in this brief tenth line of *Musings*, which stands out bold and alone among the longer lines. We find here also not a few other phrases that are still more distinctively characteristic of Bryant, such as "the shrouded earth," "the scarf of years," "the lovely vestal throng."

The central thoughts of the poem, as well as their phrasing, may be closely paralleled in Bryant's well-known work of this period. It would seem that from the time when he wrote *Thanatopsis* he could hardly conceive of earth otherwise than as "the great tomb of

man," "one mighty sepulchre." So here, he calls it

. . . one vast chamber of the dead:
A mighty mausoleum, where
Nature lay shrouded: and the tread
Of man gives out a hollow sound,
As from a tomb.

The Journey of Life is of all Bryant's published poems the one which most closely resembles *Musings*; in fact, it is the expression, condensed into three brief stanzas, of the same succession of thoughts and moods. To make this entirely clear one has but to quote the first two lines of each stanza,—

Beneath the waning moon I walk at night
And muse on human life . . .

The trampled earth returns a sound of fear—
A hollow sound, as if I walked on tombs . . .

And I, with faltering foot-steps, journey on,
Watching the stars that roll the hours away . . .

After Bryant had written *The Journey of Life* (and we know that this was in 1826), he perhaps laid aside the poem *Musings*, thinking that he had given the essence of it in his briefer lyric. We may be permitted,

however, to prefer the more full and free and spontaneous version, and may even find it more beautiful than the other. It may lead us more gently and persuasively to the mood of quiet acceptance and aspiration which Bryant drew so often from converse with night and the stars. "The thoughtful stars," he calls them in *The Firmament*; he was ever their poet and devotee, and they never failed to bring him inspiration and "sweet commune." Most of all he loved the Pleiades—"the gentle sisters," as he names them here—

The group of sister-stars . . . the gentle seven,

as he says again in a later tribute, *The Constellations*. Through all his long life, devoted more to public service than to poetry, and for the most part "in city pent," he needed only to walk alone at night,

And toward the eternal stars again aspire,

in order to find again the memories of his youth, and the Nature-inspiration which was the inmost essence of his genius.

NEW YORK, February, 1907.

Missings

I pass'd on my nightly path alone;
No friendly form was hovering near,
No friendly voice was in mine ear,
But the night wind's wailing tone.
On the wide drear field no autumn bloom
Look'd gay, no flower's rich perfume
Was breathing incense o'er the pale
Of the shrouded earth, and ~~thick~~ and tall
And sighing to the passing breeze
Stood up the gray old trees.

I pass'd on my nightly path alone
And my weary feet trod faintly on.
I look'd around me the desolate earth
To woe and sorrowful thoughts gave birth
And flung its own dark woven stole
And its damp chill breathings o'er my soul
And my spirit was heavy: 'Tis sad
To look on this beautiful earth when clad
In its robes of darkness, as it were
But one vast chamber of the dead,
A mighty Mausoleum, where
Nature lay shrouded, and the tread
Of man gives out a hollow sound,
As from a tomb. I look'd around
O'er the desolate earth: there was no ray
Of gladness there: I turn'd away,
And look'd to the glorious heavens afar,
* Where the stranger orb, in his flaming car,
Rode ~~down~~ ^{on} his destined way:
Like a proud and bloody conqueror,
Bearing the banner of his war,
Arrayed in his golden robes of fame,
And crown'd with a victor's diadem.

I look'd to the lovely vernal throng
Of shining stars, and they smild on me
With a kind and gentle sympathy —
For I have lov'd them long,
From youth to manhood I have lov'd
With each pure and bright divinity

To hold sweet ~~Commons~~ ^{Commons} I have lov'd,
In boyhood's hour of glee,
And since the sombre scarp of years
Lies o'er me, full many a night
Beneath their canopy of light,
And felt my soul grow pure and bright
As I gaz'd on them: And yet it cheers
My spirit, when the phantom fears
Of the far future darkly rise,
Like storms in autumn's mellow skies,
And memories of sorrow roll,
Like mountain mists, ~~o'er~~ ^{o'er} my soul.

I lov'd them, all each one had power
To chase the shades of my sad hours.
Each one was dear: but yet, than all
That sat within Night's regal hall, —
As round some Sultan's, haram throne
Sat the bright dames, — more sweetly shone,
To me, my own lov'd Pleads;
When glancing through the old elm trees,
That proudly rear'd their leafy dome
Around my boyhood's peaceful home,
As the eyes of gentle sisters, they
Sent down their mild and tranquil ray.

When years had roll'd and on their wings
Were ~~that~~ borne away life's bloomings,
Their gentle smile, serene and calm,
Came o'er my heart, a healing balm.
For it brought in all the glow of truth
The hallow'd memories of youth.

+ + + + +

MUSINGS

I PASS'D on my nightly path alone;
No friendly form was hovering near,
No friendly voice was in mine ear,
But the night wind's wailing tone.
On the wide drear field no autumn bloom
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Was breathing incense o'er the pall
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And sighing to the passing breeze
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I look'd around me—the desolate earth
To wan and sorrowful thoughts gave birth
And flung its own dark-woven stole
And its damp chill breathings o'er my soul
And my spirit was heavy: It is sad
To look on this beautiful earth when clad
In its robes of darkness; as it were
But one vast chamber of the dead:

A mighty mausoleum, where
Nature lay shrouded: And the tread
Of man gives out a hollow sound,
As from a tomb. I look'd around
O'er the desolate earth: there was no ray
Of gladness there: I turn'd away,
And look'd to the glorious heavens afar,
Where the stranger orb,¹ in his flaming car,
Rode on his destined way:
Like a proud and bloody conqueror,
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And crown'd with a victor's diadem.

I look'd to the lovely vestal throng
Of shining stars, and they smiled on me
With a kind and gentle sympathy—
For I have lov'd them long:
From youth to manhood I have lov'd
With each pure and bright divinity
To hold sweet commune: I have rov'd,
In boyhood's hours of glee,
And since the sombre scarf of years
Was over me, full many a night
Beneath their canopy of light,
And felt my soul grow pure and bright

¹ The comet of Encke.

Photograph of a person standing in a wooded area, possibly a forest or park. The person is wearing dark clothing and is positioned in the center of the frame. The background shows dense trees and foliage.



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THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
PRESS, 1963
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As I gaz'd on them: And yet it cheers
My spirit, when the phantom fears
Of the far future darkly rise,
Like storms in autumn's mellow skies,
And memories of sorrow roll,
Like mountain mists, upon my soul.

I lov'd them all: each one had power
To chase the shades of my dark hour:
Each one was dear: but yet, than all
That sate within Night's regal hall,—
As round some Sultan's haram throne
Sit the bright dames,—more sweetly shone,
To me, my own lov'd Pleiades;
When glancing through the old elm trees,
That proudly rear'd their leafy dome
Around my boyhood's peaceful home,
As the eyes of gentle sisters, they
Sent down their mild and tranquil ray.

When years had roll'd and on their wings
Were borne away life's blossomings,
Their gentle smile, serene and calm,
Came o'er my heart, a healing balm.
For it brought in all the glow of truth
The hallow'd memories of youth.

Godfrey of Boulogne.

The moon hung low o'er Provence vales,
'Twas night upon the sea,
From France was wood by Africa gate,
And paid in ministry.
Along the Rhone then moves a band,
Their banner to the breeze,
Of mail-clad men with iron hand,
And steel on breast and knees.
The herdsman following in dooves
Far in the night alone,
Read faintly through the olive grove,
'Twas Godfrey of Boulogne

She must still remember on the heights
The glaciers lay in shade,
The stars withdrew their faded lights,
The moon went down the glade.
Proud Giva saw the day from far,
And showed it to the plain;
She heard the din of coming war,
But told it not again.
The goat herd reared on the rocks,
Grooming of battle's none
Was watered by his startled flocks,
'Twas Godfrey of Boulogne.

Night hung upon the Danube's stream,
Deep midnight on the vale,
Along the shore no beacon gleam,
No sound is on the gale.
The Turkish lord has banded care
The haven sleep profound,
Save one fair Georgian sitting there
Upon the Turkish ground.
The lightning flashed a transient gleam,
A glancing banner shone,
A host swept swiftly down the stream,
'Twas Godfrey of Boulogne.

'Twas soon upon Byzantium,
On street and tower and sea,
On Europe's edge a warlike hum
Of gathering chivalry.
A host went boldly through the throng,
Of Ethiops, Arabs, Hind,
Jews, Greeks and Turks, bright then among
Their swords flashed thousand suns.
Their banner cleared Byzantium's dust,
And like the sun it shone,
Upon their armor can no rust,
'Twas Godfrey of Boulogne.

INTRODUCTION

THE ballad here printed for the first time, through the liberality of Mr. Bixby, is probably the earliest of the extant verses of the author. No date can with certainty be given it; but very likely it was written during his college life, which ended in the summer of 1837. It was during those years at Harvard that he read Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered*, and still earlier, like many young poets, he had delighted in the easy, flowing verse of Mrs. Hemans.

This ballad (perhaps the only one he ever wrote) savors of both Tasso and Mrs. Hemans. In *The Service*, written in 1840, are traces of this early interest in Godfrey of Boulogne and the Crusades; and portions of *The Service* may have been written a year or two before it was offered to Margaret Fuller for *The Dial*, in 1840, and by her declined.

This ballad was never offered anywhere for printing, I fancy, but cherished by some aunt or cousin into whose hands it fell, and thus preserved in the Thatcher family at Bangor,

Maine, where Mr. Bixby found it in 1906, along with later verses unknown to the public, which appeared in The Bibliophile Society's recent Thoreau publication.

The poetical product of Thoreau's youth was much larger than he ever allowed to appear in print; nor did the whole of it fall into the hands of his literary executors,—his sister Sophia, Emerson, Ellery Channing, Harrison Blake, E. H. Russell and myself. I name these six persons, because all of us have, first or last, had a hand in the work of presenting his writings to the public. To these might be added Mr. Henry Salt, his English biographer, who edited in London the only collection of his poems aiming at completeness which has yet appeared. Several persons aided Mr. Salt in this collection, notably, Mr. Blake, myself and Miss Anna Ward, of Spenser, Mass. But none of these eight persons ever had all Thoreau's verses in hand, or even within their knowledge. Sophia Thoreau may possibly be the exception, but I doubt it.

F. B. SANBORN

CONCORD, MASSACHUSETTS,
January 28, 1907.



IAVII

Misses, Messrs. Mr. Haby (London) 1884.



GODFREY OF BOULOGNE

THE moon hung low o'er Provence vales,
'T was night upon the sea ;
Fair France was wooed by Afric gales,
And paid in minstrelsy ;
Along the Rhone there moves a band,
Their banner in the breeze,
Of mail-clad men with iron hand,
And steel on breast and knees :
The herdsman following his droves
Far in the night alone,
Read faintly through the olive groves,—
'T was Godfrey of Boulogne.

The mist still slumbered on the heights,
The glaciers lay in shade,
The stars withdrew with faded lights,
The moon went down the glade.
Proud Jura saw the day from far,
And showed it to the plain ;
She heard the din of coming war
But told it not again :
The goatherd seated on the rocks,
Dreaming of battles none,

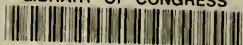
Was wakened by his startled flocks,—
'T was Godfrey of Boulogne.

Night hung upon the Danube's stream,
Deep midnight on the vales;
Along the shore no beacons gleam,
No sound is on the gales;
The Turkish lord has banished care,
The harem sleeps profound,
Save one fair Georgian sitting there,
Upon the Moslem ground;
The lightning flashed a transient gleam,
A flaring banner shone,
A host swept swiftly down the stream,—
'T was Godfrey of Boulogne.

'T was noon upon Byzantium,
On street and tower and sea;
On Europe's edge a warlike hum,
Of gathered chivalry:
A troop went boldly through the throng
Of Ethiops, Arabs, Huns,
Jews, Greeks and Turks,—to right their wrong;
Their swords flashed thousand suns.
Their banner cleaved Byzantium's dust,
And like the sun it shone;
Their armor had acquired no rust,—
'T was Godfrey of Boulogne.

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