

the first American poet of genuine worth. A very opportune moment it was, too, that Bryant came upon the scene with his poem, and began the great task of building up a national literature for America. On account of the lack of literary work, the people in England had already begun to cast a slur upon America. But what could be expected from a nation so young, from a people that had but a few years before cast off the bonds with which it had been connected to the mother country? Several other persons, indeed, had written a few poems before this time, but their works, compared with Bryant's, are but mere fragments. Bryant himself tells us in some part of his writings who these persons were, but he gives us no idea as to what sort of poetry they wrote.

At last, though, the people had been blessed with a true poet; the whole range of American readers now had something to boast of, and the critics, both in England and America, pronounced very favorable comments on his work.

Though "Thanatopsis" was indeed a strange poem on which to base American literature, it was Bryant's first and undoubtedly his greatest effort, and one which, when carefully read, is seen to contain many beautiful and striking thoughts.

"To him who in the love of Nature holds
Communion with her visible forms, she speaks
A various language ;

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The golden sun,
The planets, all the infinite host of heaven,
Are shining on the sad abodes of death,
Through the still lapse of ages. All that tread
The globe are but a handful to the tribes
That slumber in its bosom."

Having now left Cummington to pursue his profession and to eke out a living for himself, we next find Bryant steadily climbing the ladder of fame as a prominent lawyer of Great Barrington, Mass., but never do we catch him neglecting his muse.

Thanatopsis was followed by "The Yellow Violet," a very pretty poem momentarily revealing the poet's tenderness and his love of Nature.

"When beechen buds begin to swell,
And woods the blue-birds warble know,
The yellow violet's modest bell
Peeps from the last year's leaves below.

Ere russet fields their green resume,
Sweet flower, I love, in forest bare,
To meet thee, when thy faint perfume
Alone is in the virgin air.

And when again the genial hour
Awakes the painted tribes of light,
I'll not o'erlook the modest flower
That made the woods of April bright."

This latter poem was followed by the "Inscription for the Entrance to a Wood," a poem wherein Nature is described in all its beauties.

Both these poems, together with some minor ones, won for Bryant so great a reputation that he was invited to deliver a poem before the Phi Beta Kappa Society of Harvard College. Having accepted this offer, he wrote the "Ages," which describes in a few compact verses, the world's history from the Creation to his own time.

"For look again on the past years :— behold
How like the nightmare's dreams have flown
away
Horrible forms of worship, that of old,
Held o'er the shuddering realms unquestioned
sway."

This effort was so well received by the critics that Bryant now compiled a volume of his poems. had it printed, and by it asserted that he was the same Bryant of six years before—the American poet.

Never having evinced much pleasure in the study of law, the poet in 1825 became assistant editor of the *New York Review and Athenaeum Magazine*, through the kindness of some friends. This publication was indeed well edited, treating all popular questions in a thorough manner, and not in the cursory and flippant way that too often characterizes the magazines of the present day. Bryant, however, saw that his efforts in this particular direction were unappreciated by the reading public of New York; so after a few years' work on this and several other magazines, he took in hand the *Evening Post*. This paper was an advocate of all the popular measures of the time, and consequently was well received by the citizens at large. What is to be