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William Cullen Bryant.

BY W. H. HUSTON.

A STORY has been handed down from feudal times of an old knight who, knowing that his time of death was come, summoned his vassals, called for his armor, donned it, and died as he had mostly lived—plume on brow and spear in hand. There is something stirring in the thought of such a death. To die in harness and at the post of duty has always been the wish of the best of men. There are few, however, that are fortunate enough to deserve the words—

“He lay like a warrior taking his rest,
With his martial cloak around him,”

as did William Cullen Bryant; and, though the circumstances of his death are peculiarly sad, it is doubtful if he would have wished them different. His last day of conscious life—May 29, 1878—differed little from its predecessors. In the morning he sat in the editorial room of the *New York Evening Post*, as had been his custom for over fifty years. In the afternoon he addressed an immense gathering in the Central Park of New York, on the occasion of the unveiling of the statue of Mazzini, the great Italian patriot. Those that heard him speak at that time will surely never forget the scene. On an elevated platform stood one of the first poets of the age, surrounded by the wealthiest and the best men of New York. Eighty-four years of age, he was remarkable for the contrast between his locks, as white as snow,

and his seemingly unabated strength of body. No wonder that his words were listened to with reverence, and that long and earnest applause greeted him when, advancing from beneath the umbrella held over his head to protect him from the rays of a summer sun, he turned towards the statue and uttered these noble words:—

“Image of the illustrious champion of civil and religious liberty, cast in enduring bronze to typify the imperishable renown of thy original, remain for ages yet to come, where we place thee, in the resort of millions; remain till the day shall dawn—far distant though it may be—when the rights and duties of human brotherhood shall be acknowledged by all the races of mankind.”

An hour after uttering these words—surely worthy to be the last public utterance in a life spent in the cause of liberty and progress,—when entering the house of a friend, he fell backwards upon the steps of stone, and was taken unconscious to his home, where he lingered, with rare intervals of consciousness, till the 12th of June.

The news of his death was not received with that expression of sadness that might have been anticipated; for the event was not unexpected, and besides, Bryant was not a popular poet. There were many, however, whose grief was all the deeper because they knew that he had passed away before he had received his due measure of praise, and who were confident that