The Letters of William Cullen Bryant

Bryant, William Cullen, II, Voss, Thomas G.

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Bryant, William Cullen, II and Thomas G. Voss.

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XXV

Thy Task Is Done
1865
(LETTERS 1510 TO 1584)

OH, slow to smite and swift to spare,
Gentle and merciful and just! . . .

Thy task is done; the bond are free;
We bear thee to an honored grave
Whose proudest monument shall be
The broken fetters of the slave.
—"The Death of Lincoln,"
April 1865

As the corpse of Abraham Lincoln, murdered five days before by John Wilkes Booth, lay on a shrouded bier in the White House on April 19, 1865, Bryant was composing an elegy to the President to whom his editorials had given stout support, despite his occasional personal doubts, throughout four war years. After the cortege bearing the coffin had paused, on its passage toward an Illinois burial, for the homage of a great crowd at New York’s City Hall, it followed a solemn procession through Union Square on its way to the Hudson River Railroad Depot. Bryant’s “The Death of Lincoln” was read by Rev. Samuel Osgood to another vast gathering in the square. Later Osgood recalled Bryant’s standing, “as [it] seemed to me,” below Henry Kirke Brown’s equestrian statue of Washington, “as the 19th Century itself thinking over the nation & the age in that presence.”

From the day Bryant’s cadences sounded across the casket, he received in rapid succession so many entreaties to write Lincoln’s life that he was loath to decline. “In the unimpassioned calmness of your own evening,” wrote his pastor Henry Bellows, director of the United States Sanitary Commission throughout the war, “you can do a justice nobody else will, to the tender beauty of Mr. Lincoln’s character.” Theodore Tilton urged that such a work would please Americans more than one by any other; George Bancroft would read it “as I read everything you write with delight & instruction.” John Greenleaf Whittier assured him, “It would give great satisfaction to all loyal men, to know that the work was in thy hands.” And Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote, “No man combines the qualities for his biographer so completely as yourself and the finished task would be a noble crown to a noble literary life.” Bryant’s reply reflected both diffidence and reluctance to engage in partisanship outside his journalistic writing. “It is not only his life,” he replied to Holmes, “but the life of the nation for four of the most important, critical,
and interesting years of [its] existence, that is to be written. Who that has
taken part like myself in the controversies of the time can flatter himself that
he shall execute the task worthily and impartially?” His correspondents might
have wondered whether such a reservation was not disingenuous in one who
had memorialized public figures so controversial as William Leggett and
James Fenimore Cooper, and proved so just a eulogist of Thomas Cole and
Washington Irving. Yet Bryant's careful and at times caustic scrutiny of the
late Administration’s conduct of the war would almost surely have hobbled
an even-handed assessment of its course.

It may be that a “letter” of congratulation Bryant addressed to the
“Soldiers of the Union Army” in the Evening Post on New Year’s Day, 1865,
had convinced these petitioners that he was the one to recount the war's
history as well as that of its leader, for here he had caught the tone of high
drama in the turn of events which was bringing triumph to the North.
“Soldiers!” he exulted, “This is your work! These are your heroic achieve-
ments; for these a grateful country gives you its thanks. . . . The history of
the present war will be the history of your courage, your constancy, and the
cheerful sacrifices you have made to the cause of your country.” He urged
the troops to look to a “crowning triumph,” when the nation should have
erased the “dark stain” of slavery to become a “noble commonwealth . . .
founded on universal freedom.”

Bryant’s resolve to forward this aim was evident the next day in a petition
to Congress which he urged Edward Everett to sign, calling for a law
abolishing slavery. Though Everett cautioned him that there was no Consti-
tutional warrant for such a law, that the act would probably cause a “new
revolution,” Bryant persisted. In May he wrote John Bigelow at Paris that,
with the assassination of Lincoln, “Never before has the post of President
seemed an unsafe one. . . . We have now seen that to make it secure against
the dagger of the assassin, slavery must be abolished.”

An unhappy by-product of Booth’s crime was its depressing effect on his
brother, the popular tragedian Edwin Booth, a loyal Union man, who was so
“crushed” by this act, wrote Harvard mathematician Benjamin Peirce to
Bryant, that he feared “our common friend” would never again appear
before an American audience. Peirce implored the editor to publish proofs
of Edwin Booth’s loyalty, hatred of rebellion, and admiration for Lincoln,
which Bryant did at once.

Although Bryant told a friend toward the end of the year, “I am now
comparatively little occupied with the Evening Post, passing the greater part
of my time in the country,” he continued to take as his editorial province
several crucial issues. Among these were Reconstruction of the Union, the
punishment of rebel leaders, and the tariff.

He saw, in the problem of restoring the unity of the nation, he told
Dana, a matter on which it was “easy to go wrong.” He proposed a fundamen-
tal doctrine: “Do nothing for revenge, nothing in the mere spirit of proscrip-
tion.” He wrote a British friend that, though the problem of readmitting the
defeated states was a perplexing one, “For my part, I hope the thing will be
done with as little exercise of arbitrary power by the federal government as possible.” He thought that if no punishment were inflicted on rebel leaders, the people might be so indignant as to “execute justice upon them in their rude way.” Yet, as he said in an editorial, “What Shall Be Done With Jefferson Davis,” to implicate the fugitive Confederate President in Lincoln’s murder without clear proof would be widely considered unjust; to try him for treason would be a precedent for retribution on European rebels against tyranny. He thought the only charge that could be clearly supported against Davis was that he had sanctioned the murder by starvation of Union prisoners.

Bryant continued as president of the American Free Trade League, and its tenets were the basis of his editorial policy. For twenty years he had known the British parliamentary champion of free trade, Richard Cobden, who died in 1865, and on the masthead of his association’s journal, “The League,” were Cobden’s words “FREE-TRADE: THE INTERNATIONAL COMMON LAW OF THE ALMIGHTY.” Now, a few months after Cobden’s death, the London editor of his political writings asked Bryant, “as a free trader no less than a distinguished man of letters,” to introduce its American edition. Bryant complied, in a tribute which was later added to British editions as well.

Bryant’s verse composition in 1865 was slight—though James T. Fields pressed him repeatedly for contributions to the Atlantic Monthly, writing in February, “No poet is more welcome to our army of readers, and ‘when is Mr. Bryant to appear in your columns again?’ is one of the most frequent inquiries in this quarter,” and, in October, “The ‘Atlantic’ holds its head higher every time you thus enrich it.” The second comment referred to a fantasy, “Castles in the Air,” written three years earlier. Bryant sent Fields a poem marking Dante’s six-hundredth birthday, and jotted down other verses which he did not publish. Aside from “The Death of Lincoln,” his only notable poetic effort was a start on translating Homer’s Iliad—a task which would preoccupy him on and off for five years.

If poetry and journalism occupied him but lightly this year, it was in part because he had set about repossessing the homestead of several hundred acres at Cummington, Massachusetts, which had been sold thirty years earlier when most of the Bryants moved to Illinois, and renovating the house to provide a summer rendezvous for his Illinois relatives, and a retreat in cool mountain air where his wife might find better health. He bought the property in May, and soon a contractor and a dozen workmen were busy raising the main part of the old farmhouse, chimneys and all, and building under it a parlor floor with ten-foot ceilings, as well as adding a study, a smaller replica of his father’s medical office, which had been detached and carted by oxen down into the Westfield River valley to serve as a tenement for the only black family in Cummington.

Bryant’s eminence in various respects was recognized not only in pleas to write Lincoln’s life, but also in tributes from other quarters. Soon after Robert Waterston had won from him a letter stressing the need to teach natural history in public schools, which was read before a Boston conference attended by prominent scientists, Harvard professor of natural history Louis Agassiz
begged him to acknowledge "handsomely" in his newspaper the benefactors of Agassiz' coming expedition to Brazil, "knowing what deep interest you take in anything that may promote the interest of science in this country." Soon after, Henry Bellows sought Bryant's aid for a Yale arctic scholar who "evidently regards you as a sort of pole-star, & naturally follows you on his way to the pole itself." A California admirer of his verses, recalling the first line in "A Forest Hymn," "The groves were God's first temples," wrote that she had given to a giant Sequoia grove a marble tablet in his name, to be placed on a very old tree "that has not only braved the storms of centuries, but which felt the scourge of the savage-fire. It is a splendid specimen of a green old age, still strong, still fresh, with birds singing in its lofty top, a fitting emblem of the poet of the forest, 'Bryant.'" "A Forest Hymn" reminded the novelist and reformer Lydia Child of one of Mendelssohn's "Songs without Words"; she thanked Bryant for what he had done for her soul, and "for all you have done to advance free principles." The Cambridge anthologist and ballad-collector Francis James Child asked leave to reprint several of Bryant's poems. James Russell Lowell was "particularly pleased" with the course of the Evening Post on Reconstruction. Playwright George Boker, noting that Bryant had been a founder of the Union League, planned to do "justice to your pure patriotism and private worth." Speaker of the House of Representatives Schuyler Colfax thanked him for suggestions on foreign affairs. And a Baltimore schoolteacher who was promoting a memorial to Edgar Allan Poe asked Bryant to write verses for a fund-raising benefit, drawing a regretful refusal because of his personal knowledge of that unhappy writer's aberrations in New York twenty years before.

Early in 1865 several mishaps in his Illinois family distressed Bryant. The death of one of Austin Bryant's sons was soon followed by that of Cullen's next younger brother, Cyrus. Later Austin himself suffered broken ribs when kicked by a horse, bringing on, it was thought, the heart disease from which he died the following year. Their loss was especially poignant for Cullen, who had hoped to gather them at the Cummington homestead in the summer of 1866. A source of relief, however, was the acquittal in May of his business partner Isaac Henderson, charged with fraud the previous year against the Navy Department. And in November his early friend William Gilmore Simms, whose South Carolina plantation home had been burned by marauding Federal troops, wrote from a New York hotel that Bryant's books and letters had been lost with his library. Self-respect, Simms said, prevented him from seeking out his "conquerors" even among old friends, but he wondered whether Bryant might replace the lost titles, and assured him of his everlasting friendship.

When, in December, the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution, outlawing slavery, was ratified, Bryant wrote Catharine Sedgwick that it was so "magnificent an act of justice" that it was "worth living for even were this life to be followed by no hereafter."
1510. To the Soldiers of the Union Army


Soldiers of the Union Army: I have been desired by the conductor of the “Soldiers' Friend” to address a few words to you at the opening of a new year. I take the occasion to offer you my warmest congratulations on what you have accomplished in the past year, and what you may expect to accomplish in the year before you.

At the beginning of the year 1864 the rebel generals presented a formidable front to our armies. Lee, at the head of a powerful force, occupied the banks of the Rapidan and the Rappahannock, threatening Washington and Pennsylvania. Early and his rebel cavalry held the wide valley of the Shenandoah. Johnston, with a formidable army, had posted himself at Atlanta, deemed an impregnable position, in which the rebels had stored the munitions of war in vast magazines, and collected the machinery by which they were fabricated.

A glance at the history of the past year will show you how all this state of things has been rapidly changed.

It will show General Grant transferred from the West, and invested with the command of our armies, pressing Lee by a series of splendid and hotly contested victories southward to Richmond, where Grant now holds the first general of the rebel army and its choicest troops unwilling prisoners.

It will show General Sheridan sweeping down the valley of the Shenandoah, and, by a series of brilliant successes, driving Early from the field.

It will show General Sherman leaving his position in Tennessee, and, by a series of able movements, reaching Atlanta, flanking and defeating Hood, capturing Atlanta, giving that stronghold of rebellion to the flames, and then making a triumphant march of three hundred miles through the heart of Georgia to Savannah, which yields at the first summons, while the troops which held it save themselves from capture by flight.

It will show General Thomas, left in Tennessee by Sherman to deal with Hood, luring that commander from his advantageous position, and then falling upon his troops with an impetuosity which they cannot resist, till, by defeat after defeat, his broken and diminished army has become a mere band of fugitives.

It will show Mobile Bay entered by our navy, under the gallant Farragut, and held by him until the Federal troops shall be ready to occupy the town from the land side. It will show Wilmington, that principal mart of the blockade-runners, menaced both by sea and
land, and Charleston trembling lest her fate may be like that of Savannah.

The year closes in these events, which, important as they are in themselves, are no less important in the consequences to which they lead, and which, as the ports of the enemy fall into our hands, as their resources one by one are cut off, their communications broken, and their armies lessened by defeat and desertion, promise the early disorganization of the rebellion, a speedy end of all formidable resistance to the authority of the Government, and the abandonment of the schemes formed by the rebel leaders, in utter despair of their ability to execute them.

Soldiers! This is your work! These are your heroic achievements; for these a grateful country gives you its thanks. Millions of hearts beat with love and pride when you are named. Millions of tongues speak your praise and offer up prayers for your welfare. Millions of hands are doing and giving all they can for your comfort, and that of the dear ones whom you have left at your homes. The history of the present war will be the history of your courage, your constancy, and the cheerful sacrifices you have made to the cause of your country.

I feel that you need no exhortation to persevere as you have begun. If I did, I would say to the men at the front: Be strong; be hopeful! your crowning triumph cannot be far distant. When it arrives, our nation will have wiped out a dark stain, which we feared it might yet wear for ages, and will stand in the sight of the world a noble commonwealth of freemen, bound together by ties which will last as long as the common sympathies of our race.

To those who suffer in our hospitals, the wounded and maimed in the war, I would say: The whole nation suffers with you; the whole nation implores Heaven for your relief and solace. A grateful nation will not, cannot, forget you.

The nation has voted to stand by you who have fought or are fighting its battles. This great Christian nation has signified to the Government its will that the cause, in which you have so generously suffered and bled, shall never be abandoned, but shall be resolutely maintained until the hour of its complete triumph. Meantime, the salutation of the new year, which I offer you, comes from millions of hearts as well as from mine, mingled in many of them with prayers for your protection in future conflicts, and thanksgiving for your success in those which are past. May you soon witness the glorious advent of that happy new year, when our beloved land, having seen the end of this cruel strife, shall present to the world a union of States with homogeneous institutions, founded on universal freedom, dwelling together in peace and unbroken amity, and when you who have fought
so well, and triumphed so gloriously, shall return to your homes, amid
the acclamations of your countrymen, wiser and more enlightened,
and not less virtuous than when you took up arms for your country,
with not one vice of the camp to cause regret to your friends.

WILLIAM C. BRYANT.


1. *The Soldier's Friend, and Grand Army of the Republic*, a monthly periodical
published in six volumes, from 1864 to 1870.

2. Jubal Anderson Early (1816–1894, United States Military Academy 1837), a
Virginia lawyer and Confederate Lieutenant-General, whose independent forces
threatened to cut communications between Washington and the West after June 1864.

3. Joseph Eggleston Johnston (1807–1891, United States Military Academy 1829), Confederate general who was relieved of his command after failing to halt
Sherman’s advance on Atlanta in July 1864.

4. Philip Henry Sheridan (1831–1888, United States Military Academy 1853),
Union general in command of the Army of the Shenandoah, who defeated Early at
the Battle of Cedar Creek on October 9, 1864, after making his famous twenty-mile
ride from Winchester, Virginia, to rally his faltering troops.

5. John Bell Hood (1831–1879, United States Military Academy 1853), Confed­
erate Lieutenant-General, who succeeded Johnston before Atlanta in 1864.

6. David Glasgow Farragut (1801–1870, Union Rear-Admiral, led his fleet
through minefields at the entrance to Mobile Bay, Alabama, on August 5, 1864, and
captured its defenses.

1511. To Edward Everett

New York, January 2d 1865
Office of the Evening Post

My dear sir,

The enclosed paper has been placed in my hands with the request
that I should forward it to you, in order that if you approve of it, you
might give it your signature, and in that case return it to my address
in this city.¹

I am, sir,
very truly yours,

Wm C. Bryant.

P.S. An immediate return, I am informed, is desirable.

W. C. B.

MANUSCRIPT: MHS address: Hon. Edward Everett.

¹ This paper (unrecovered) was a petition to pass a law abolishing slavery
throughout the Union. Everett’s reply, written only eleven days before his death, was
a cautious doubt that Congress had the constitutional right to take such action. Everett
to Bryant, Boston, January 4 [1865], *Life*, II, 224.
1512. *To John Howard Bryant*  
New York Jan 10th 1865.

Dear Brother.

I received duly the two drafts. That intended to pay a part of Mr. Wiggins's note has been duly endorsed on it. With this I send a statement of the payments and the balance due.

I think I authorized you in my last to sell the smaller house in Princeton. If not I do it now.

We are all as well as usual, though the remarkably inconstant weather, or something else has given some of us severe colds. Yours truly

W. C. BRYANT.

MANUSCRIPT: NYPL-BFP address: Jn H Bryant Esq.

1. See Letter 1391.

1513. *To Louis Lang*  
[New York, cJanuary 20, 1865]

My dear sir

The Album of sketches, presented to me by the Artists of the Century Club reached my hands safely along with your letter. I have looked it over with a satisfaction in which it is hard to say whether admiration for its contents or pleasure at receiving such a testimonial of good will from my friends the artists predominated. It has called forth the praises of all who have seen it. Allow me again through you to present my thanks to the Artists of the Century for so superb a gift.

I am dear sir
truly yours

W C BRYANT.

MANUSCRIPT: NYPL-GR (draft) address: Louis Lang Esq.

1. Lang (561.14) was a member of the “Committee of the Century for the Bryant Festival” on November 5, 1864, and one of the forty-six artists who contributed to the portfolio of sketches given Bryant on that occasion. See 1480.1. Lang's letter of January 18, 1865, accompanying the sketches, is in NYPL-GR.

1514. *To Alexander Williamson*  
New York, January 21st, 1865.

Dear Sir,

I thank the Burns Club of Washington for the honor its members have done me, by including me among the poets. It is a compliment of no common value to be kindly remembered by the admirers of
Thy Task Is Done

Burns. At the commemoration of his birth-day by the Club, will you do me the favor to present the following.

_The Scottish Dialect_, Embalmed and made imperishable by the genius of one of the great poets of the world.¹

I am, sir,
respectfully and truly yours,
W. C. BRYANT.

MANUSCRIPT: QPL address: Alexd F. Williamson Esq / Secy. of the B. C. W.


1515. To Abraham Lincoln

New York January 24th, 1865.

My dear sir,

I hear that some change is to be made in your Cabinet¹ and use the privilege of a constituent of yours, respectfully to address you on the subject, in behalf not only of myself but a large class of citizens.

We hope that Governor Andrew of Massachusetts will be appointed to an important place in your Cabinet. He possesses the important requisites of an integrity beyond suspicion, good sense and just political views. These would not suffice for the Head of a Department without decided executive talent and that he possesses in a very eminent degree. His conduct as Governor of Massachusetts has given ample proof [of] this. No Executive of any state has taken more prompt, wise and effectual measures to aid the federal administration in suppressing the rebellion. He has done the right thing at the right moment, showing himself ready for any emergency.

Moreover, he seems to have the virtue of disinterestedness beyond most of our public men. He avoids no labor and declines no sacrifice when the public good is concerned.

These are high qualifications, not often found united in one man. For the good of the nation and the honor of the administration it is hoped that your choice may fall on him.²

I am, sir,

very respectfully & truly yours,

W. C. BRYANT.

MANUSCRIPT: LC (final); NYPL–GR (draft) ADDRESS: To Mr. Lincoln / President of the United States.

1. Late in 1864 radical Republican opposition in Congress to the Administration’s policies on war department patronage and the impending reconstruction of the

2. Several years earlier Bryant had expressed a favorable opinion of the abilities of John A. Andrew (1239.2) to John M. Forbes. See Letter 1239. Andrew, who took no Federal office, retired with honor from the governorship of Massachusetts in 1866.

1516. To an Unidentified Correspondent
New York  Jany. 30, 1865.

Dear sir,

I thank you for the copy of the Proceedings of your Genealogical Society in their commemoration of the three hundredth anniversary of Shakespeare's birthday. They are quite interesting, and the Address of Mr. James Freeman Clarke is one of the ablest and most entertaining things of the kind that I ever read.¹

I am sir,
very truly yours
W. C. BRYANT.

Manuscript: HCL.

1. James Freeman Clarke (1810–1888, Harvard 1829, Harvard Divinity School 1833), reformer, Transcendentalist, and friend of Emerson's, was the Unitarian pastor from 1854 until his death of the Church of the Disciples in Boston. His “Address” on Shakespeare was published in the New England Historic Genealogical Society, Tercentenary Celebration of the Birth of Shakespeare . . . (Boston, 1864), pp. 11–52.

1517. To Austin Bryant
[New York? cFebruary 1, 1865]

Dear Brother.

I have heard the sad news of the death of your son William, the first of your children whom you have lost by death.¹ The lingering nature of his disease must have prepared you for the blow but it is always a severe calamity to lose a child, and especially one who in his early years before the infirmity of his constitution developed itself was so promising. To your wife the severity of the visitation must have been greatly mitigated by the reflection that by her skilful nursing and prescriptions his life was probably prolonged greatly beyond what it could have been under the care of others. Please express to her and to the rest of your family how much my wife and I sympathize with you and them in their bereavement—

I am exceedingly grieved to hear so bad an account of Cyrus's health—²

Yours affectionately
W. C. BRYANT.
Thy Task Is Done

1. William Austin Bryant, Austin's third child, was born on December 21, 1826.
2. Cullen's next younger brother Cyrus died about two months after this letter was written, in his sixty-seventh year. See Letter 1529.

1518. To William F. Phillips

New York February 11th 1865

Dear sir,

I cannot comply with the request which you and your friends have done me the honor to make me, for several reasons. One of these is, that I do not deliver public lectures, and another that I never read my poems in public, not having the necessary confidence in my own elocution, even if I saw no other objection. On these grounds I venture to hope that I shall be readily excused.

I am, sir,
very respectfully yours,
Wm C. BRYANT.

1519. To Thomas Wentworth Higginson

New York March 13, 1865.

Dear sir,

I thank you for your graceful and spirited lines which are much better than the subject deserves.

I hope that, inasmuch as they were originally intended for publication, I do not take an improper liberty in giving them to the public through the Evening Post.2

I am, sir,
truly yours,
W. C. BRYANT.

1520. To Dom Pedro II de Alcântara, Emperor of Brazil

New York, March 27, 1865.

Your Majesty:

I have received, through the Rev. Mr. Fletcher,2 the photographic card bearing your Majesty's likeness, which you did me the honor to
send me, and take this method of expressing my thanks. I am most happy to possess the likeness of one who to the highest power in the state unites a generous regard for the liberties of his people and a philanthropic desire for the greatest good of the greatest number. I have the honor to be

Your Majesty's most obedient and obliged servant,

W. C. BRYANT.

manuscript: Unrecovered text: Life, II, 200n. address: To H. I. M. the Emperor of Brazil.

1. Emperor Dom Pedro II of Brazil (1825–1891) reigned from 1837 to 1889. Under his rule, the slave trade was outlawed in 1850, and in 1871 a law adopted providing for the gradual emancipation of slaves.

2. James Cooley Fletcher (1823–1901), a Presbyterian minister of Indianapolis, Indiana, served as a missionary in South America, Portugal, and Italy. He was a co-author of Brazil and the Brazilians, published in 1857.

3. On October 22, 1863, Fletcher had written Bryant from Rio de Janeiro (NYPL-BG):

The two volumes of your poems, which I received from you last summer, I had the pleasure of putting into the hands of the Emperor of Brazil this morning. Your name and some of your works were already familiar to him, and for a long time he has had your likeness, and for some ten years the picture of your residence. He desires me to thank you for those volumes, and wishes you to know that he is ready to do all that is in his power for the advancement of human rights. He desires to see the day when Brazil (whose laws in regard to human rights, so far as the black man is concerned, have always been far in advance of yours) shall not have a single slave. He takes a deep interest in our struggle, and believes that the whole sentiment of Brazil, of planters as well as non-slaveholders, is against an institution which Portuguese cruelty and short-sightedness left as a heritage to Brazil, and which institution will perish in the mild process of law in a very few years, and, if the North is successful, in a much shorter period.

On the back of the photographic carte de visite to which Bryant refers is his endorsement, "Sent from the Emperor of Brazil to W. C. Bryant by the hand of the Revd. J. C. Fletcher—Methodist Missionary. Sept. 1864.—" See illustration.

1521. To Robert C. Waterston

New York  March 27th. 1865.

My dear sir.

I am very glad to hear of the plan, mentioned in your letter, of bringing together the teachers of the public schools in Boston, to hear eminent naturalists speak of their branch of knowledge and to inspect the collections of natural history in your principal museum. The interest in these studies so awakened, will of course have its influence
on the instructions of the teachers, and through them will be communicated to a vast number of pupils.

Man is necessar[il]y a naturalist. It is a remarkable passage in sacred history which relates that all the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air were made to pass before the father of the human race who distinguished them from each other, and gave to each species the name it was afterwards to bear. We learn, almost unconsciously, to separate into classes the animals which share with us the breath of life, the plants of earth's surface, and minerals of her bosom. But the knowledge of nature gained in this manner, is unavoidably imperfect, defective and sometimes delusive. The educated naturalist comes and supplies deficiencies and rectifies mistakes, showing the innumerable degrees of relation which the works of creation bear to each other, and revealing to the inquirer, a new world of beauty and order, a mighty and magnificent system of parts, in which the most perfect harmony is united with boundless variety, from the largest objects of vision, even to the minutest forms of existence, which the sight, with the aid of the microscope, is able to detect.

I cannot but wish the greatest success to a plan so well calculated as yours, to exercise and strengthen the faculties of the mind, and to fill it with reverence and gratitude to the great First Cause of all things.

I am, dear sir,
most truly yours,

Wm C Bryant


1. Waterston had written on March 24 (NYPL–BG) that he planned a meeting on April 1 with six hundred public school teachers, at which prominent speakers would urge the teaching of nature, and wished Bryant to send him a line or a letter on this subject.

1522. To Rebecca B. Spring

[Roslyn? cApril 5, 1865]

. . . Your letter is as inspiriting as a spring morning. It is Spring throughout, it treats of the spring, it is like the springtime full of cheerfulness and hope and it [several words illegible] the signature of Rebecca Spring. The spring time of peace is now at hand in the bud and we shall soon have the perfect blossom—"the bright consummate flower" [now?] I hope [that?] the stormy winter of Civil War [?] since the great cause of our strife—the tempest breeder, is removed.2—There are some countries where the climate is that of perpetual spring—that of Caraccas for example— May there [be also?] a corre-
sponding state of political [custom?] the [institutions] of which are so happily constituted that there is always the prospect of something better some improvement of [character?] and condition towards which the people who [enjoy?] it are constantly [leading?], and in which there is [consequently?] the danger of [dissolution?] by [ ] of [natural causes?]

[These are?] speculations for you and your husband better fitted to deal with the new questions now arising, . . . .

MANUSCRIPT: NYPL–GR (draft).

1. See 583.2. Her letter of April 2 is in NYPL–BG.
2. On February 1 a Congressional Resolution submitted to the states the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution, prohibiting slavery within the United States. On April 9 General Lee surrendered his Army of Northern Virginia to General Grant at Appomattox Court House, Virginia.

1523. To Benjamin Peirce

Roslyn Long Island
April 21st 1865.

My dear sir.

Poets, I know are said to be forgetful, the warm beams of imagination melting down the figures impressed by memory; but a small poet who has not much imagination to brag of may remember very well. I certainly recollect the dinner you speak of, very well, and retain a vivid image of your looks, having never seen you before. So you will not think that I am very deep in what old Donne calls "the sinne of Poetry." 3

I have attended to your request respecting Edwin Booth. The public feeling toward him is very kind and full of sympathy, and after a little time we shall have him on the stage again. 4

I am, dear sir
truly yours
W. C. BRYANT.

MANUSCRIPT: American Antiquarian Society 

1. Benjamin Peirce (1809–1880, Harvard 1829) was a Harvard professor of mathematics and astronomy from 1833 until his death. He was generally thought to be the most outstanding mathematician in the United States.
2. In a letter to Bryant from Cambridge of cApril 17, 1865 (NYPL–GR), Peirce recalled meeting Bryant in New York some years earlier. He remembered, too, that he had taught with Cyrus Bryant at the Round Hill School in Northampton after leaving college, and had once visited the Bryant Homestead in Cummington.
3. Cf. John Donne, Hymn to God the Father.
Poetry indeed be such a sinne  
As I think brings death, and Spaniards in.

John Donne, Satire II, 5.

4. On March 22 the tragedian Edwin Thomas Booth (1833–1893) had completed a triumphant run of one hundred performances as Hamlet in New York, and on April 14 was in Boston portraying the same role when his brother John Wilkes Booth (1838–1865) was reported to have shot President Lincoln. Edwin, a loyal Union man, was so overcome with shame and horror that he immediately retired from the stage. In his letter of 2April 17, Peirce wrote that the blow to “our common friend” had “crushed him so” that many people thought he would never feel able to appear again before an American audience, and asked Bryant to publish extracts from Booth’s letters, with Peirce’s attendant remarks. Bryant had already, on April 18, published several extracts from Boston papers in praise of Booth. Now, on April 21, he quoted a letter from the artist Jervis McEntee (1828–1891) of New York affirming Booth’s loyalty to the Union cause and declaring that the actor had voted for the entire Union ticket in 1864. Quoting from several letters written by Booth between 1861 and 1865 (apparently those sent by Peirce), in which he had reiterated his hatred of rebellion, Bryant added, “We can ourselves bear witness to the almost boyish exultation with which Mr. Edwin Booth boasted to his friends that he had voted for the first time in his life, and that he had been permitted to vote for Mr. Lincoln whose private and public character he soearnestly admired.” Odell, Annals, VII, 639–641; EP, April 18, 21, 1865.

1524. To Anna Parsons¹

New York, April 25, 1865
Office of The Evening Post

Dear Madam.

If you will let me know, when you come to New York with your friends, where I may find you, I will do myself the pleasure of calling to thank you in person for your attention in sending me an early copy of your husband’s charming translation of Dante.² I like his substitution of the quatrain for the terza rima, which puzzles ears accustomed to our familiar forms of versification.

I am, Madam,
very truly yours,
W. C. Bryant.

MANUSCRIPT: HCL ADDRESS: Mrs. Anna Parsons.

1. Mrs. Thomas William Parsons.
2. In 1843 Thomas William Parsons (1819–1892), a Massachusetts dentist and poet, had published a translation of the first ten cantos of Dante’s Inferno.

1525. To John Bigelow

Roslyn, Long Island
May 1st 1865.

Dear Mr. Bigelow

Excuse this dainty paper on which I write. It is quite too fine for a plain man like me, but I did not buy it; it is a present, and it might be affectation to decline using it.
I have never written to you to congratulate you on your appointment as Minister, but the Evening Post, you saw, both advised it, and applauded it when it was made. The Tribune and the Times you might possibly have observed, had nothing to say, except to mention it in the barest terms; perhaps through inadvertence; perhaps for the reason that the least said is soonest mended. I hope you find the post of Minister less laborious than that of Consul.

I have often thought of writing to you since your appointment was announced, but the immediate cause of my writing at present is a request made by a neighbor of mine in the country, that I should ask a question in which he has a personal interest.

He, as well as myself, has seen no notice of the appointment of a Secretary of Legation for you, and wishes to know if there is a vacancy and if there is what is the chance for him. I will tell you who and what he is.

His name is John Ordronaux; he is over thirty years of age; he was born in this country of French parents, so that the earliest language he learned was French; he uses both languages with equal facility, and I believe equal purity. He is an excellent Latinist, and quite at home among the Latin authors of ancient and modern times, particularly modern writers on law and medicine. He has had a college education, and after completing it, studied first medicine and then law, and was admitted to practice in both professions. He is connected with Columbia College as a Professor of Medical Jurisprudence, on which he has delivered several courses of lectures. He is the author of several pamphlets and tracts, one of which on the "Health of Armies," published immediately on the breaking out of the war, was a very seasonable and useful one. In politics, he is warmly loyal; in general politics a little too "conservative," as it is called for me. He is of a religious turn, an Episcopalian, and perfectly moral. His manners are quiet and his demeanor modest. You will perceive that for a Secretary of Legation in France, he unites qualifications not often found in the same individual. If you want such a man you can have him, provided the appointing power will consent. What do you say?

I have never known this people so much excited as by the murder of the President. If Booth had not been slain in the attempt to take him, I am not certain that any prison would have been strong enough to hold him against the popular fury till the time of his trial. Never before has the post of President seemed an unsafe one for him who held it, except in the way of being worried and teased to death. We have now seen that to make it secure against the dagger of the assassin, slavery must be abolished.

You enter upon your office at a rather fortunate time for yourself,
a time when the American Republic has shown itself powerful beyond what many of its friends in other countries ventured to hope. The representative of a powerful nation obtains his share of the respect which men every where show to power. But do not let that set you up, as the militia captain said to his wife, when he advised her to treat her neighbors just as she did before he was elected.

I thank you for the supplemental volume of Taine. It is hardly as entertaining as the others—probably for the reason that he extends his discussions of the literary character of two or three authors to such great length.

I am here at Roslyn—alone—except for my friends the birds, and the opening flowers, and the leaves just beginning to cast a thin shade, and the grass just high enough to lean in the wind—an early season. My kind regards to Mrs. Bigelow, who I hope bears her honor meekly.

I am dear sir
truly yours
W. C. BRYANT.

MANUSCRIPT: NYPL–Bigelow address: Hon. J. Bigelow.

1. Upon the death in December 1864 of the American Minister to France, William Lewis Dayton (1807–1864, Princeton 1825), John Bigelow was appointed to his office, after having served with distinction as American Consul-General at Paris since 1861.

2. John Ordronaux (1830–1908, Dartmouth 1850, Harvard Law School 1852, M.D. Columbian—later George Washington University—1859), although not appointed to the post Bryant sought for him, was already embarked on a remarkable teaching and scholarly career, holding faculty positions simultaneously at the Columbia and Boston University law schools and the medical schools of Dartmouth and the University of Vermont. In addition to his many published writings on public health and medical jurisprudence, he was an accomplished classical scholar. A bachelor, he had been adopted as a young boy by Bryant's Roslyn neighbor, Joseph W. Moulton.

3. On May 16 Bigelow replied that the first secretarship had been filled by John Hay (1838–1905), later, 1898–1905, United States Secretary of State, and the second by one G. W. Pomeroy. Bigelow, Retrospections, II, 556.

4. On April 26 Abraham Lincoln's assassin John Wilkes Booth had died in a fire which consumed the Virginia barn in which he had taken refuge from pursuing Federal troops.


1526. To Oliver W. Holmes

Roslyn, May 1 [1865]

... Your letter is so persuasive that, if persuasion could have changed my purpose, I will not say that it might not have prevailed with me. There are various reasons, however, some of which are personal to myself, and others inherent in the subject, which discourage me from
undertaking the task of writing Mr. Lincoln's life. It is not only his life, but the life of the nation for four of the most important, critical, and interesting years of existence, that is to be written. Who that has taken part like myself in the controversies of the time can flatter himself that he shall execute the task worthily and impartially? . . .


1. On April 27, 1865, Holmes had written Bryant (NYPL–GR) urging him to write a life of Lincoln. "The whole country would be grateful to you," he went on; "It would be a double monument enshrining your own memory as imperishably as that of your subject. No man combines the qualifications for his biographer so completely as yourself and the finished task would be a noble crown to a noble literary life."

2. Holmes's letter was only one of several Bryant received from prominent writers making the same suggestion. Their receipt within a fortnight of Lincoln's death seems to reflect widespread, spontaneous recognition of the unique qualifications of one who had, at once, been an acute observer of Lincoln's conduct throughout the war, and an eloquent and skillful chronicler of the lives of such national figures as Thomas Cole, Fenimore Cooper, and Washington Irving. Theodore Tilton, editor of the widely circulated weekly the Independent, wrote on April 25 (NYPL–GR) that a biography of Lincoln by Bryant would please the American people more than such a book by any other, and "could not fail to be an American classic, and perhaps prove the crowning achievement of your life." The next day historian George Bancroft wrote him, "If you should undertake the life of Lincoln, I am sure you would treat it with truth & dignity, & I should read it as I read everything you write with delight & instruction" (NYPL–GR). John G. Whittier wrote on April 30 (NYPL–GR), "It would give great satisfaction to all loyal men to know that the work was in thy hands."

1527. To Bella Z. Spencer

[Roslyn, May 1, 1865]

. . . General Sherman's case is a hard one, considering how well he has done till his late false step; but I do not see what can be done for him. What can be done for a man who sends a bullet through his own head? I can imagine nothing more insane than his proceedings towards Johnston, when he had him in his power and had nothing to do but require his surrender. . . .


1. See Letter 1496.

2. Eight days after General Lee surrendered to General Grant at Appomattox, General Sherman negotiated the capitulation of Confederate General Joseph E. Johnston's army in North Carolina on such liberal terms, and with such broad political implications going beyond his powers as a military commander, that his agreement with Johnston was repudiated by the new administration of Andrew Johnson, and Sherman was widely criticized for overstepping his authority. See Allan Nevins, The
To Frances F. Bryant

New York, Wednesday
May 3d. 1865.

I believe Julia has written to you not to hurry in coming down to Roslyn. I write to say that I wish you would come very soon. The place is in all its beauty, and the house very comfortable. Sarah has had the kitchen as clean as water and brooms could make it and kept house admirably. The new servants washed yesterday. Fanny expects to go to Roslyn today—her children are in high glee at getting into the country again.

Yours ever
W. C. BRYANT.

To Richard H. Dana

Roslyn, Long Island
May 4th. 1865.—

I am truly sorry to hear so unfavorable an account of the health of your family. That of your son Edmund, at his time of life, and with his fine talents and capacities of usefulness, is particularly distressing. I feel acutely for those who suffer great bodily pain. I shrink from it, I believe, with greater dread than most people. I hope I am not wrong when I include it in the petition, “deliver us from evil,” and I am thankful that at seventy years, so little of it falls to my share. May you all get as little of it as is best for you. A few weeks since I lost a brother some years younger than myself, who suffered most severely, a long time, from stone in the bladder. They operated for its extraction, when it had nearly killed him, and the operation finished the work of the disease.

I did not see the number of the Daily Advertiser to which you refer, and it was not to be found about the office of the Evening Post—so I sent to Boston for it, and have just got it. I agree with it very fully. That is a strong and a very striking point which he makes that the legislatures of the southern states should not be suffered to repeal their ordinances of secession. To repeal an ordinance implies that until its repeal it is in force. The governments of the states in revolt are mere revolutionary organizations which the federal government
can no more recognize than it can the government of which Jefferson Davis is the head. They have all, I believe altered their constitutions, so as to conform them to their state of separation from the federal government, and they must all be reorganized under new constitutions.

I see that the point made in the speech on the assassination of Lincoln is more fully set forth in the speech made the next day after the surrender of Lee, published in the Boston Transcript, which he or you were so kind as to send me.3

This matter of restoring the Union is one in regard to which it is, I think easy to go wrong. There are two parties in regard to it—those who are concerned in the rebellion,—those who are for punishing almost every body, and those who are for punishing nobody. If no examples should be made, and the men who took the lead in the rebellion—and they are not very few in number—should be allowed to go at large, I could by no means feel sure that the people would not be moved to take them in hand, and execute justice upon them in their rude way—which we ought, if possible, to prevent.

It is a comfort, as you say, to be able to think so well of Everett’s conduct in his later years, and to get a better opinion of his public character.4 I shall be very glad to get the pamphlet you speak of.

Bigelow, I think was appointed at Seward’s suggestion. It is one of Bigelow’s infirmities to think well of Seward. He is I think well fitted for that place and for that reason, I had little hope of his getting it.

I have no doubt that Lincoln dictated the terms which Grant made with Lee in his surrender. They tell a worse thing of Lincoln—that when Weitzel offered a safe conduct to the rebel legislature of East Virginia to assemble in Richmond, Stanton, in great anger—sent this message to Weitzel—“What the devil are you about?” and that Weitzel answered, “Ask Mr. Lincoln.”5 The Vice President, I know was astonished and indignant at the proceeding, and hurried off to remonstrate against it.

I have not read the article on “Grit”6—but am looking it up and shall read it—since you speak so well of it. Say every kind thing for me to all those of your household—

Very truly yours
W. C. Bryant.

manuscript: NYPL—GR address: R. H. Dana Esq.


2. Cyrus Bryant; see Letter 1517.
3. Dana's letter is unrecovered. Richard H. Dana, Jr.'s speech on the assassination of President Lincoln, delivered on April 18, was printed in the Boston Daily Advertiser and the Boston Journal on April 17, 1865. That on Lee's surrender, made on April 10, has not been found in the Boston Evening Transcript. See Speeches in Stirring Times and Letters to a Son, ed. Richard Henry Dana 3d (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1910), p. 509.

4. Edward Everett, whose tendency to compromise on issues of national importance, and his opposition to Lincoln's candidacy in 1860, had somewhat vitiated his reputation as a statesman, had nevertheless throughout the Civil War and until his death in 1865 strongly supported the President and the Union cause in his public addresses. For Dana, Jr.'s speech on Everett, see 1537.1.

5. A few days before Lee's surrender to Grant on April 9, Lincoln had authorized General Godfrey Weitzel (1835–1884, United States Military Academy 1855), then in command of the captured Virginia capital, to permit the state's legislature to assemble at Richmond, with the expectation that it would withdraw Virginia's soldiers from the Confederate armies. On April 12, after the unanimous dissent from this order by his cabinet, the President rescinded it. Allan Nevins, The War for the Union. IV. The Organized War to Victory, 1864–1865 (New York: Scribner's [1971]), pp. 303–305.


Manuscript: NYPL–GR.

1530. To Francis Howland Dawes

New York, May 12th 1865
Office of The Evening Post

My dear sir,

Could I, by and by, trespass on your hospitality for a couple of nights in a visit to Cummington—or is there any body at the old house that would lodge me? I want to see it, and suppose there is no hotel in your neighborhood. I have written to Mr. Clark at Easthampton asking when the stage leaves Hinsdale for Cummington.

My brother John has written to me asking whether when the lower story of the old house is lifted the floor of it could not be let down so as to make the ceiling higher and the rooms more airy. Please mention this to him when you see him, if he is at Cummington. If he is not, or if he has frequent communication with Easthampton you need not take that trouble as I have written to him about it at Easthampton.

John seems to think that this change might be made without great expense, but Mr. Clark is the best judge.

I have received—sometime since—your letter about Mr. Lawrence Smith and the trees—for which I am much obliged.

Yrs truly

W. C. Bryant
1. Frances Howland Dawes (1819–1893) of Cummington was a town assessor and
magistrate. He was a younger brother of Henry Laurens Dawes (1816–1903), then a
leading member of the United States House of Representatives, who in 1875 suc-
cceeded Charles Sumner as United States Senator from Massachusetts. BDAC.

2. Early in 1865 Bryant bought from a Cummington farmer, Welcome Tillson,
through the agency of Francis Dawes, the family homestead which his brother Austin
had sold to Tillson in 1835. His plan for the renovation and enlargement of the house
in which he had passed his childhood contemplated raising the main part of the
building one story, greatly increasing its living space. Here he planned to spend the
warmer summer months with his family, and to entertain those of his brothers and
their families who might come on from Illinois.

3. A Mr. Clark, of Easthampton, Massachusetts, was the builder Bryant had
engaged to alter the dwelling.


1531. To The Board of Trustees of Columbia College

[Roslyn] May 20, 1865

Gentlemen.

The friends of the Reverend Samuel R. Ely1 of this place having
laid before your board an expression of their desire that he should
receive the degree of Doctor of Divinity, I take pleasure in seconding
the application. Mr. Ely has long been a faithful minister of the
Presbyterian Church, and is moreover greatly beloved for his social
qualities, the benevolence of his heart and his activity in all works of
charity and mercy. For a considerable time he has given his services
gratuitously to a small church in Roslyn, which by his aid has been
enabled to clear itself of debt and to acquire some property. His
standing in the denomination to which he belongs, his time of life and
his long professional labors seem to me to render the Degree of Doctor
of Divinity a suitable acknowledgement to his merits. . . .2

1. See 1165.3.

2. In 1865 Columbia University (then Columbia College) awarded the honorary
degree of Doctor of Divinity to the Rev. Samuel Rose Ely. Information from the
Curator of the Columbiana Collection, Columbia University.

1532. To Charles F. Sedgwick

Roslyn, May 22, 1865

[My dear sir.

I thank you for the information you give me concerning our old
classmates of Williams College. I have, I think, all along known less of
them than you. Of my room-mate Avery with whom of course I was
more intimate than with any other of our class, it happened that I
could never hear much except that he became an Episcopal minister
and was settled somewhere, I think in Maryland. I used to find his
name in the catalogue of ministers of the Episcopal denomination,
and after a time I found it no more—so I infer he had been dismissed
to his rest—for I could not suppose that so good a man could be
unfrocked.

It is not my intention to deliver a poem at Williams College, or
anywhere else. I once delivered a Phi Beta Kappa poem at Cam-
bridge, and that was forty-four years ago; but since that time I have
uniformly declined all requests to do the like, and I get several every
year. It is an undertaking for young men. If I could be put back to
twenty-six years of age, and my wife with me, I might do it again;
youth is the season for such imprudences. I should never be able to
satisfy myself in the composition of a poem on such an occasion; and
then it should be an exceedingly clever thing; not a work for the closet,
though, and admirably read—read as you would read it, and as few
can—not to bore the audience. You have observed that such poems,
with few, very few, exceptions, are unspeakably tiresome.


2. The matter between square brackets is taken from the draft manuscript.
3. Sedgwick had written Bryant on May 12 (NYPL–GR) that he wondered about
their other Williams College classmates, and had heard that Bryant would read a Phi
Beta Kappa poem at the next commencement.

1533. To John H. Gourlie

Roslyn May 24 1865

Dear Gourlie

Come out on Friday after noon and stay till Monday.
The country is in all its glory. You can take the steamer Arrow
Smith at Peck Slip at 4 o'clock P.M. or the train from James Slip either
at 3 or 4 P.M. all for Roslyn. We have a branch railroad you know.

Yours very truly
W. C. BRYANT.


1534. To Preston King

[New York?] May 31, 1865

. . . I believe you are a personal friend of Mr. Anthony J. Bleecker, who has been a very active and efficient politician in the free soil
cause, and who has not been as you know very manfully remem-
bered.

It has been suggested that there might be a change in the appoint-
ments to some of the principal offices here in New York. If this be so
and the Surveyorship of the Port or the post of Naval Officer or that
of Marshal of this District should in consequence become vacant, Mr.
Bleecker is a candidate for either of them—and would fill either of
them well. You know that he is a man of integrity intelligence
and great despatch in business—and for my part I cannot but hope that
something more worthy of his acceptance than what he has now will
be offered him.

I write to you because both Mr. Bleecker and myself know that
your advice and opinion have great weight with the President, and in
the hope that you may be inclined to give it in this instance if the
occasion should arise. . . .

MANUSCRIPT: NYPL-GR (draft) ADDRESS: Hon  Preston King.

1. Although King had been succeeded as a United States Senator from New York
by Edwin D. Morgan in 1863, he remained an influential Republican leader. On
August 15, 1865 he was appointed by President Johnson collector of the port of New
York, and as such was the principal purveyor of Federal patronage. Glyndon G. Van
2. See 1222.1.
3. Bleecker was appointed an assistant inspector of internal revenue; see 1222.1.

1535.  To James T. Fields

New York, June 19th. 1865.
Office of the Evening Post

My dear Mr. Fields.

I have a translation in blank verse of the Parting of Hector and
Andromache from the Sixth Book of Homer's Iliad.1 I doubted, at
first, whether it would be the thing for your Monthly, and if it be not,
please to have no scruple or hesitation in telling me so flatly. If you
would like it, I will make a fair copy and send it.2

Yours very truly

W. C.  Bryant

MANUSCRIPT: Gettysburg College Library ADDRESS: Jas  T. Fields Esq.

1. Lines 505–640 of Bryant's The Iliad of Homer (Boston and New York: Houghton
Mifflin [1870]), I, 162–164.
2. These verses were published in the Atlantic Monthly, V (December 1865), 657–
659.
1536. To John Bigelow

My dear sir.

At the desire of our friend John A. Graham Esq. I give this letter of introduction to Henry Megem Esq. a native of France, a resident of this country for thirty years, who is spoken of as a gentleman of high character, intelligent and well informed. He has been engaged in the manufacture of woollens in this country and to him we are indebted for the introduction of new processes, machinery &c in that branch of industry. He desires, I am informed, this letter that if necessary he may be able to show his character and standing in his adopted country.

I am dear sir

truly yours

W. C. BRYANT.

MANUSCRIPT: NYPL—Bigelow address: to the Hon John Bigelow.

1. Megem has not been further identified.

1537. To Richard H. Dana

Dear Dana,

I have read with even more pleasure than I expected, your son's Address on the Life and Character of Edward Everett. Without absolutely overlooking the deficiencies of Mr. Everett's character, it deals with them in a kindly temper and brings out his virtues in their best aspect without any extravagance of eulogy. With regard to those qualities which were wanting I was pleased with the ingenious manner in which their absence is intimated. I like the political philosophy of the Address very much, and it seems to me that nothing could be more just and considerate. The composition too is admirable, and such as it is a relief to read after what we generally get on such occasions.

I have for sometime past been intending to write this to you, but for some reason, laziness, I suppose, I have neglected doing it till now; and now that it is no longer on my mind I am more comfortable.

I have read the article in the Atlantic Monthly entitled "Grit," at your instance, and find it quite clever. Your son was not able to enumerate that quality among Mr. Everett's virtues.

I wish you could be here for a day or two at this beautiful season. Long Island is in its greatest flush of verdure. They say it never gets too much rain, and the showery skies have made the meadows heavy with grass and the trees with leaves.
Kind regards to all those of your household. My wife and Julia desire theirs to all of you.

W. C. BRYANT
who is, as ever, yours.


2. See 1529.6.

1538. To Marvin Henry Bovee

Office of The Evening Post
41 Nassau Street, Cor. Liberty, New York. June 26th. 1865

My dear sir,

I got your letter in the country some days after it was written. I do not think that I can contribute any thing of what you call material aid which I suppose means money to the Michigan Fair. I have had calls to the extent of what I can afford, which I have already answered.

The free trade question I perfectly understand is to come up as one of the great political issues of the coming time in our country. We have the worst tariff, almost, that I can conceive of, and if you know anything of the recent course of the Evening Post, you know that it has never lost a good opportunity of discussing that question.

I am glad to see that you have not forgotten the gallows.

I am, sir,
very truly yours
W. C. BRYANT.

1. Marvin Henry Bovee (1827–1888) was a member of the Wisconsin state senate.

2. This letter is unrecovered.


1539. To Catharine Sedgwick

[Roslyn?] June [26?] 1865

My dear Miss Sedgwick

I have for some time past thought of writing to congratulate you on an event in which you of course take a keen interest—the suppres-
Vision of the rebellion and the close of our bloody civil war. And yet I have nothing to say on the subject which is not absolutely common place. All that can be said of the terrible grandeur of the struggle that we have just gone through, of the vastness of the conspiracy against the life of our republic, of the atrocious courses of the conspirators, of the valour and self-sacrifice and constancy of the North, and of the magnificent result which Providence has brought out of so much wickedness and so much suffering has been said over and over. When I think of this great conflict and its great issues my mind reverts to the grand visions of the Apocalypse, in which the messengers of God come down to do his bidding among the nations and the earth is reaped and the spoils of its vineyards are gathered and the wine press is trodden and flows with blood, and the vials of Gods judgments are poured out and the rivers are turned into blood, and finally the dragon is cast into the bottomless pit.¹

Neither you nor I thought that slavery would disappear from our country till more than one generation had passed away—yet that great inconsistency of our institutions becomes extinct even in our life time. It is a great blessing to have lived long enough to see this mighty evil wrenched up from our soil by the roots and cast into the place prepared for the dragon and his angels.²

I hear that you are most welcome again in Berkshire, having arrived there without inconvenience. If I come that way this summer I hope to see you. My wife and daughter send their love. Please to remember me kindly to those of your kindred among whom you sojourn.

I am dear Miss S.
yours very truly

W. C. BRYANT.


1. See Rev. 14–20, passim.

1540. To Andrew Johnson¹

New York, June 27th, 1865.

The undersigned, citizens of New York, respectfully recommend the appointment of Charles W. Horner Esqr, of New Orleans, to the vacancy on the Bench of the Supreme Court of the United States,² occasioned by the death of Judge Catron.³

Mr. Horner is well known to possess that thorough familiarity
with the civil law desirable in that important station; and while he has
commended himself to the bar of Louisiana by his legal knowledge,
irreproachable honesty, and urbanity in his association with the pro-
fession, he has, in our opinion, earned from the Country at large this
recognition of his unflagging loyalty to the Nation, during the trying
period of rebel supremacy in his State. He was one of the very small
number of citizens of New Orleans, whose fidelity to the Union was
proof against either the blandishments, or the threats of the rebel
leaders. A democrat from his earliest political associations, he dis-
cerned at once the attempt to fasten a government of caste upon the
soil of the Union. We believe that, when sound political principles are
found united with rare legal acquirements in the person of a citizen of
the South, it commends him especially to the position above indicated.

Which considerations we respectfully submit.

W. C. BRYANT and Others.4

MANUSCRIPT: UVa address: Andrew Johnson: President of the United States.

1. Johnson (1449.2) had succeeded to the presidency on the death of Lincoln on
April 15, 1865.

2. Evidently Horner, not further identified, was not given such an appointment.

3. John Catron (c1786–1865) of Tennessee served as an Associate Justice of the
United States Supreme Court from 1837 to 1865.

4. In addition to Bryant, this letter, in an unidentified holograph, was signed by
thirteen others, including Francis Lieber, George P. Putnam, Robert Dale Owen, and
Parke Godwin.

1541. To George Michael Daniel Arnold1

[Roslyn?] July 5th 1865—

My dear sir.

I thank you for the Nuremburg Album which you have been so
kind as to send me, and in a particular manner I desire to acknowledge
your kindness in allowing me to see the translation which you have
done me the honor to make of my poem of Sella and one or two
shorter ones. You have given the poem a better title to favor than it
had before by rendering it into your noble language and giving it the
advantage of your own flowing versification. I am glad that you think
so well of it—but shall be led to suspect, if it should be kindly received
by your literary circle at Nurnberg, that this may be mostly owing to
the skill of the translator rather than the merit of the original.

Allow me to point out one little inaccuracy in regard to the sense.
The line

When all the glistening fields lay white with frost2
does not mean that they were covered with snow but that they were whitened with what we call hoar frost—the work of a frosty night covering the fields with rime which disappears in the morning, as the day advances. . . .

MANUSCRIPT: NYPL–GR (draft) ADDRESS: To George Arnold of Nuremberg.

1. Arnold (1811–1893), who directed the firm of G. G. Fendler & Company of Nuremberg, was a founder there of the Literarische Verein in Nürnberg in 1840. Longfellow, Letters, IV, 243.

2. From “Sella” (1862). See Poems (1876), p. 387. No communication from Arnold to Bryant at this time has been recovered, nor have his translations of Bryant's verses been located.

1542. To Frances F. Bryant

Roslyn, Saturday morning.
July 8th 1865.

Dear Frances.

Julia came home last night with a head ache from the heat. When I heard you went by rail, I feared that you would have an uncomfortable time of it. The air, however, is now cooler, and while I am writing this, at half past six in the morning you, I suppose, are still in the midst of your morning nap. I hope you will have a cooler day than yesterday to get to Barrington.

Julia brought news that Laura will not return to Roslyn, her sister being [about] to sail next week for Europe.1 I have a letter from Gourlie, saying that the business which he expected would bring him to New York being otherwise accomplished he should not come this summer. I send you a letter from Miss Christiana Gibson. Last night there came wedding cards from Miss Mitchell and a Mr. Crane.2—All well.

Yours ever
W. C. BRYANT.

MANUSCRIPT: NYPL–GR ADDRESS: Mrs. F. F. Bryant.

1. Laura Leupp was one of three daughters of the late Charles M. Leupp (487.1). It is uncertain which of her sisters, Margaret or Isabella, was the European traveler. See James T. Callow, “American Art in the Collection of Charles M. Leupp,” The Magazine Antiques (November 1980), p. 1008, Pl. X. In 1866–1867 Laura traveled through Europe with Bryant and his daughter Julia. See Letter 1664.

2. Bryant inadvertently misstated the groom's name. In 1865 Julia Clark Mitchell (b. 1844), eldest daughter of Ellen T. S. Mitchell and Clark Ward Mitchell (738.1) of Dalton, Massachusetts, was married to Byron Curtis Weston (1832–1898, M.A. Williams), who had founded the Byron Weston Paper Company at Dalton in 1863. He served for three terms from 1879 as Lieutenant Governor of Massachusetts, and

1543.  *To Frances F. Bryant*  

Roslyn  Sunday Evening  

July 9th  1865.

Dear Frances

I was much relieved of my concern for you, yesterday morning, when I found that the weather had become cooler during the night. In the afternoon Miss Dewey got a letter from Miss Russell, describing your journey to Bridgeport as not by any means uncomfortable. Charles Miller came out by the boat, and is to return tomorrow morning. At the same time, I got a letter from Miss Rose for you which I enclose.

Last evening Miss Pollitz and a young friend of hers, Miss Lee, called, coming up from the foot of the garden, where they had landed in a boat. I learned from Miss Pollitz that it is reported that Mrs. Ellen Stuart was married to Elijah Ward before she sailed, and that I had the credit of being the author of the report.¹

Today has been a very agreeable day, though the sun is rather powerful—the sky being exceedingly clear. I went to church in the morning and Julia and her guest in the afternoon. This evening, again, is cooler than ever, and we have been sitting with closed doors and windows.

On Saturday your furs were attended to and the woollen garments in my closet.

Monday morning, July 10th. A comfortable night and a cool morning. We begin to miss you.

I have been thinking of coming up for you on Saturday, when the afternoon train goes through. What do you say? Miss Dewey has some plan about going to the Pool.² Kind regards to all.

Yours ever.

W. C. BRYANT

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¹ Those persons mentioned in the two preceding paragraphs who can be identified are Orville Dewey's sister Jerusha who lived on Bryant's Roslyn property (see 718.3); Charles Miller (Letter 1486); Emma Pollitz (Letter 1441); and Ellen Eliza Cairns Stuart (951.2). She apparently did not, however, marry Elijah Ward of Roslyn until the following year. See Goddard, *Roslyn Harbor*, p. 34; Cairns Family Genealogical Chart, prepared by Helen Marlatt, Bryant Library, Roslyn.

² The "Pool" has not been certainly identified, but see Letter 1549. It was, perhaps, at Bash-Bish Falls, a popular picnic area where the boundaries of Massachu-
Thy Task Is Done

setts, Connecticut, and New York meet, a few miles west of the Dewey home in Sheffield, Massachusetts.

1544. To Lemuel Maynard Wiles

New York, July 11th 1865
Office of the Evening Post

My dear sir.

I have looked over your illustrations of two of my poems with great pleasure. They seem to me to have great merit and I cheerfully give my consent to their publication in connection with the poems to which they relate. I only hope that they will lose nothing of their beauty in being engraved.

I am sir,
respectfully yours,
W. C. BRYANT.

P.S. I hear that you are about to visit Messrs. Ticknor and Fields of Boston. It is a highly respectable house, and I readily give my consent that they should publish the illustrated edition of which you have spoken to me—or that if you fail to make a satisfactory arrangement with them that you should have recourse to any other respectable bookseller.

W. C. BRYANT.

2d P.S. The two poems intended to be published in this edition are those entitled Thanatopsis and the Rivulet. I add this postscript because I perceive that I have not named them in the foregoing letter.2

W. C. BRYANT.


1. Wiles (1826–1905) was a landscape painter who, after teaching art in Washington, and in Albany and Utica, New York, had opened a New York City studio in 1864. DAA.

2. The National Union Catalogue does not list such an illustrated edition as that described.

1545. To Frances F. Bryant

Roslyn Wednesday afternoon
July 12th 1865.

My dear Frances.

I went to town yesterday and wrote an article for the paper about what should be done with Jefferson Davis, which is to appear today.1 I was so beset with all sorts of people while writing it, that I was glad to get away. While there I received a letter from Judge Willard Phillips, inviting us to come to Cambridge. I have answered that I feared it
impossible. When I got home, I found your letter of Monday, for which I am obliged to you.

Miss Dewey has not been much better since you went, but this morning she has set out for the North, and Julia went to town with her, intending to pass the night and return tomorrow. It was rainy yesterday morning, and today we have light showers. The last of the hay is now falling under the scythes of three mowers, and we are in hopes of a fair day tomorrow to dry it.

Your letter of yesterday morning, addressed to Julia came today at noon, and I have taken the liberty of opening it. I am glad to learn that you are so well and so comfortable. I ordered the daily Evening Post to be sent to you when I was in town, and will see that the semi-weekly of July 7th is sent as you desire. I shall probably go to town on Saturday morning and as the afternoon train on that day comes through to Barrington, I shall take it and come to Massachusetts.

I received yesterday a letter from Miss Sedgwick in answer to the one I wrote some time since. She has not been so well of late—but said that she should hope to see us when you and I came up. I found also at the office some illustrations of my poems, Thanatopsis and the Rivulet by an artist, Mr. Wiles, who desires to publish them, with four other poems of mine also illustrated, and I have given him leave. Some of the illustrations seem to me very fine.

_Thursday morning — July 13th._

We have a promise of a fine morning to dry the hay which was cut yesterday. Nothing has happened of much consequence in the neighborhood, except that they are talking of giving a "reception["] to the returned soldiers of this neighborhood—an entertainment to which they and their families are to be invited. Mr. Ely—Dr. Ely—is busy with it.—

I think now that you may look for me on Saturday evening. Kind regards to all—

Yours ever

W. C. BRYANT.

_MANUSCRIPT: NYPL–GR_ ADDRESS: Mrs. F F Bryant.

1. On May 10, 1865, the fugitive President of the Southern Confederacy, Jefferson Davis, had been captured in Georgia and subsequently imprisoned in Fortress Monroe, Virginia—at first manacled in irons. In an editorial leader in the _EP_ on July 12, "What Shall Be Done with Jefferson Davis," Bryant discussed the various charges on which he might be tried. That of complicity in the murder of Lincoln, without clear proof, he thought, would be a mistake, for many would think him unjustly condemned. A judgment of treason might harm the cause of patriots struggling against tyranny abroad, by allowing their oppressors to cite it as a precedent for harsh measures. But, he argued, one clear crime could be proved—Davis's authorization of
the deliberate murder by starvation of Union prisoners in such stockades as Libby Prison and Andersonville.

1546. To Lemuel M. Wiles

Roslyn   Long Island   July 12th
1865.

My dear sir,

I believe that in my note to you written yesterday in some haste, I did not answer your request to be allowed to publish with your illustrations, the “Inscription &c” the “Winter Piece” “June” and “The Hurricane.” I certainly give the permission with great pleasure and shall esteem these poems of mine honored by your selection of them as well as recommended by your pencil to the special favor of the public.

I am, sir,
truly yours,

W. C. BRYANT.

MANUSCRIPT: HCL ADDRESS: L. M. Wiles Esq. / Morrisania / Westchester County / N. Y.

1547. To [Theodore Dwight, Jr.?]

New York, July 15th   1865.
Office of The Evening Post

My dear sir

I am glad that the Mexican meeting is called. My name is at the service of those who act in getting it up, but my bodily presence I cannot give since I am engaged to be in Massachusetts today, with the intention of passing the greater part of next week there.

I am, sir
truly yours,

W. C. BRYANT.

MANUSCRIPT: NYHS.

1. Theodore Dwight (1796–1866, Yale 1814) was a reformer and zealous supporter of many causes.

2. Though Dwight’s invitation is unrecovered, this meeting in support of Mexican exiles in New York was held at the Cooper Institute on July 20, 1865, and presided over by Joshua Leavitt (1794–1873, Yale 1814), Dwight’s college classmate, and a Congregational minister and reformer, managing editor from 1848 to 1873 of the Independent, a Congregational newspaper founded by Henry Ward Beecher. New York Times, July 20, 1865.
1548. To Evert A. Duyckinck

Great Barrington, Massachusetts
July 17th 1865.

My dear sir.

I had not time to answer your letter on Saturday,1 as I was about to set out for this place.

Enclosed is a letter to Mr. Van Dyck.2 Please spell his name right when you address it to him. I am not quite sure of his Christian name—so I have not used it.

Yours truly
W. C. BRYANT

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1. On July 14 Duyckinck (471.2) had written Bryant (NYPL-BG) asking help in securing an appointment as clerk in the United States Sub-Treasury office in New York for his wife's brother, Henry Panton (665.1), in the form of a letter to its director.

2. This letter is unrecovered.

1549. To Julia S. Bryant

Great Barrington July 19th 1865

Wednesday morning.

Dear Julia.

I suppose you would like, by this time to know how we are getting on. I reached, on Saturday, this place about ten o'clock in the evening. On the train I found Mr. D. D. Field,1 with whom I made an appointment to come to Stockbridge on Tuesday. We had a rainy Sunday, but I went to church and along with your mother dined at Mr. Mackie's—2 His family were all well, and Mrs. Ives seems perfectly recovered. Monday afternoon after the morning's rain was very beautiful and I took a long walk with Mr. Mackie between the mountains east of the village. Yesterday morning we took the train for Stockbridge at half past six in the morning and reached Mr. Field's in less than an hour, where breakfast was nearly ready. After breakfast a small party of us—Mr. Field and his daughter a Miss Harrington of Delaware, a Mr. Newbold and myself, went over the Housatonic and up the mountain immediately south of Mr. Fields, where he has put up a skeleton tower, which commands a very extensive prospect—both north south and west—old Greylock to the north and the region between—the dim blue Catskill mountains to the west and Monument Mountain to the south; with Taconic Mountain beyond and a broad, beautiful green valley region inclosed by these mountains. We dined at Mr. Fields and then drove about the neighborhood returning to
this place by the six o’clock train, having first seen Mrs. Henry Field and the Gourlies. A beautiful day and a very pleasant visit. We had Mr. Gourlie and Mr. Harry Sedgwick\(^3\) to dine with us.

Tomorrow we think of going to the Pool, and shall pass the night. On Saturday we go to Dr. Dewey’s, where we shall remain over Sunday and return on Monday to Bridgeport, reaching New York on Tuesday morning so as to get to Roslyn on Tuesday evening.

Your mother this morning is among the dress-makers and the shoemakers. All are well. Helen has gone to Nantucket.

Yours affectionately

W. C. BRYANT

MANUSCRIPT: NYPL–GR
ADDRESS: Miss J. Bryant.

1. See 492.4.
2. John Milton Mackie; see 1101.1.
3. Henry Dwight Sedgwick, Jr. (1289.1).

1550. To Jane P. Bigelow\(^1\)
Office of *The Evening Post,*
41 Nassau Street, cor. Liberty,
New York, July 25th 1865.

My dear Mrs. Bigelow,

A letter from Fanny which my wife received two days since in Massachusetts informed her that you thought of paying us a visit about the first of August and that you wished to know whether we could take you over to Mrs. Winkle’s from our place at Roslyn.

Most certainly we can send you to Mrs. Winkle’s or any other place in the neighborhood and the pleasure we shall receive from your visit will be enhanced by the opportunity to do you that little service.

I am, dear Madam,
very truly yours,

W. C. BRYANT.

MANUSCRIPT: NYPL–Bigelow Family Papers
ADDRESS: Mrs. J. P. Bigelow.

1. Mrs. John Bigelow; see 730.1.

1551. To George William Childs\(^1\)
Roslyn, Long Island, July 29, 1865

My dear sir.

I do not see that I can engage to furnish any thing “in my line” for the “Home Weekly,” although it is published under auspices which make it an honor to be numbered among its contributors.\(^2\) I do not
write verses often, and never except from a spontaneous impulse. Writing thus rarely, I feel under some obligation, when I have any thing in verse which I am willing to see in print, to send it to Mr. Fields of the Atlantic Monthly. While therefore I do not exactly decline the request you so obligingly make, I am not able to say that I agree to it.

I am, sir,
very truly yours,
W. C. BRYANT

MANUSCRIPT: HSPa ADDRESS: Geo W. Childs Esq.

1. George William Childs (1829–1894) was the proprietor and publisher of the Philadelphia Public Ledger, a leading daily journal, from 1864 to 1894.

2. Childs's request for a contribution to his weekly paper, presumably made in a letter to Bryant, has not been recovered.

1552. To T. B. C. Berrian
Roslyn Long Island August 1st. 1865.

My dear sir,

I thank you very much for the trouble you have taken on my wife's account and mine, and for the arrangements you have so kindly made. On Thursday we shall set out for Easthampton to avail ourselves of them.2

I hope the voyage you are about to make will be a very pleasant one and that you will find in Europe the health which eludes your search here. You visit the old world at a time when an American need not be ashamed of his country.

My wife and daughter desire their kind regards.

I am, dear sir,
truly yours,
W. C. BRYANT.


1. Berrian, probably a member of the family of the Rev. William Berrian (1033.4), has not been further identified.

2. Although no further correspondence on the matter has been located, it is evident that Berrian had arranged holiday accommodations for Frances and Julia Bryant and Minna Godwin at Easthampton, Long Island, where they spent several weeks in August. See Letters 1553–1560, passim.

1553. To Frances F. Bryant

[Roslyn] Tuesday morning
August 8th 1865.

My dear Frances,

I had rather a pleasant journey home, except that I had to wait at Greenport an hour and a half. Some of the passengers went to an
hotel in the village for a dinner and came back complaining of the bad manners of the waiters and impossibility of making them attend to the calls of the guests. At Mineola I waited about twenty minutes and a few minutes past six I was at the station in Roslyn. I find that everything has gone on well during our absence. The weather they say has been very hot and debilitating, but this morning the air is very cool and bracing and every thing fresh with the late abundant rains. In the thunder storm of Thursday Captain Kirby had the mast of one of his sloops struck with lightning and shattered to pieces, but nobody was on board.2

Yesterday Mr. Cline went with his wife and Mrs. Bigelow to visit one of the Bigelow family at Flushing. They found that Mrs. John Bigelow had not been to visit Mrs. Laurence nor Mrs. Winkle, who were very much disappointed in consequence and would have made it a serious ground of offense had they not learned of a domestic sorrow that had befallen Mrs. Bigelow. On Friday she received two letters from her husband—the first informing her that her little boy was seriously ill, and the second that he probably would not live till her return. Mrs. Bigelow's failure to visit her friends was caused by her trip to Buffalo and Saratoga.

Mrs. Cline will attend to making up your bundle, and I shall put in a few pears. Fanny's people are well. Love to Julia and Minna.

Yours ever
W. C. Bryant

P.S. I send a letter from Elijah's wife.3

Manuscript: NYPL–GR.

1. As indicated in Letter 1552, Bryant had escorted his wife, daughter, and granddaughter to Easthampton on August 3, returning to Roslyn on the 7th.
2. For Captain J. M. Kirby of Roslyn, see 513.1; Letter 1334.
3. Laura Smith Bryant (1846–1913?), wife of John Howard Bryant’s son Elijah Wiswall Bryant (1836–1892).

1554. To Frances F. Bryant

Roslyn, August 9th 1865

Wednesday morning.

My dear Frances.

I did not mention yesterday that soon after I got home on Monday I was summoned from the garden to the house. I found Mrs. Pollitz and Emma and Mrs. Vandeventer who had called to see you. Mrs. Vandeventer desired me to tell you and Julia how sorry she was to go away without seeing you. She would have called the evening she promised but it was rather late and she feared to disturb you. The
next morning Emma brought Mrs. Peabody Mrs. Pollitz's sister, and Mrs. Van to look at the pictures in the dining room, and they went away each with a bouquet from the garden.

Last evening Mrs. E. Bigelow showed me a letter from Mr. J. Bigelow to her husband. The little boy, Ernest, born in New York in 1860 is dead. The letter is written in great affliction and expresses a hope that the mother will have sailed before she hears of the sad news. Mrs. Bigelow's failure to reach Long Island was caused in this wise. She went to Saratoga with General Grant's party; from Saratoga, she went with that old rascal Thurlow Weed's party to Niagara, and at Buffalo the child of one of the party was taken ill, by which they were all detained.

I got my letters from town last evening, but there were none either for you or Julia, except some wedding cards, from Dr. & Mrs. William Eddy and Miss Welles—nothing else on them.

I send with your bundle some pears. The large are Bartlett; the longish green ones are [Rostrezer?]; the egg-shaped yellow ones are Dearborn's Seedling; the roundish red-cheeked ones are Manning's Elizabeth. Keep them till they get ripe, which you will know partly by their color and partly by feeling them.

Your house is in fine order—all the varnishing and painting done and every thing looking bright and fresh. Yesterday afternoon Mrs. Leggett called bringing with her Signor Brully, as she called Mr. Barili the singer, and her daughter Julia and a Miss Young, a fellow boarder. She cheated me of a good hour or more during which she chattered incessantly and Mr. Brully was condemned to silence.

Fanny has no servants yet and is occupied with so many matters that she cannot think of Easthampton. Love to Julia and Minna.

Yours ever

W. C. BRYANT.

manuscript: NYPL–GR address: Mrs. F. F. Bryant.

1. See Letter 1561.

2. In the summer and autumn of 1865 General Grant toured New England, lower Canada, and the Middle West. In early June he had made a short, triumphal visit to New York, West Point, and then, apparently by way of Saratoga, to Chicago for a Sanitary Commission fair. Hamlin Garland, Ulysses S. Grant; His Life and Character (New York, 1898), pp. 334–335.

3. Mrs. Augustus W. Leggett (790.1); Ettore Barili, a music teacher who was also then singing leading roles in Italian opera in New York. See Odell, Annals, VII, 512ff. and passim.
1555. To Frances F. Bryant

Roslyn, Wednesday evening, Aug. 9 1865.

My dear Frances.

I am going to town tomorrow morning and therefore begin my letter here this evening intending to send it off from town. Bond the mason is hammering in the old fruit room putting on the laths—we could not get him earlier.

I send a letter from Great Barrington for Julia. This afternoon Mrs. Leggett called again and brought a manuscript book giving an account of the persecutions she has endured, for your eye and mine only. She is a female Job, and made me think of what old Moll a Scotch attorney said after hearing a sermon on Job and his patience.1 “Job—Job— I think I have read something about him before; he seems to have been a very ill-used mon.”

Fanny went yesterday to town and brought home two girls—and Harold says a great pile of bundles including a pair of red slippers.

Yrs ever W C. B.

manuscript: NYPL–GR address: Mrs. F. F. Bryant.


1556. To Frances F. Bryant

Roslyn Long Island August 12th 1865. Saturday morning.

My dear Frances.

Julia’s letter of Tuesday morning reached me in town on Thursday. Her letter of Thursday was brought me by the steamer last night.1 I am glad to hear that you are so well and that you are all so pleasantly amused. I hope you will store up health for the coming autumn.

Henderson is wholly averse to giving Mr. Terry any part of the shore, as I thought he probably would be. I have written to Mr. Terry that as I had offered the place to Mr. Henderson and as the offer was still open I must be governed by Mr. Henderson’s wish. Henderson is decidedly of opinion that Terry is not more honest than he should be.2

I have read Mrs. Leggett’s history of the last year or two of her life.3 It is a strange affair, nothing but trouble, as was formerly the case—only a great deal more of it.

Fanny’s two servants are good for nothing neither knowing their
business nor willing to do it, and she must try again. Mr. Cline’s is willing, but knows nothing, and I saw her going off this morning.

Mr. Cline has had two letters from the Miss Deweys. Leila is to come the beginning of next week or thereabouts to set the house in order, and they will probably follow towards the close of the week.

This is a cool pale morning, with a fresh wind—a little to the northwest above and a little to the northeast below—sweeping through a gray atmosphere. I think it may be rather chilly with you. Every thing goes on well except the apple dumplings, which are failures, and not “the jockeys for me.” Love to Julia and Minna.

Yours ever

W. C. BRYANT

MANUSCRIPT: NYPL–GR
ADDRESS: Mrs. F. F. Bryant.

1. Julia’s letters are unrecovered.

2. Soon after this time, Isaac Henderson apparently acquired a house and land south of Cedar mere, between what is now Bryant Avenue and Hempstead Harbor. One N. M. Terry owned property on the East side of the highway, opposite this property, but without access to the water. See Goddard, Roslyn Harbor, p. [104], map, “Roslyn Village in 1873”; Bigelow, Bryant, p. [343].

3. Portions of the diary of Mrs. Eliza Seaman Leggett, which reveals much information about early Roslyn, were printed in the Nassau County Historical Journal, V, No. 1 (March 1942). See Goddard, Roslyn Harbor, pp. 19–20, 126.

1557. To Frances F. Bryant

New York, August 14th 1865
Office of the Evening Post

My dear Frances.

I came to town this morning, and shall be here again tomorrow intending to go to West Point for a day with Mr. [Alfred] Pell.

On Thursday Cullen Bryant the young Lieutenant¹ called on me. He has much improved in looks, and is really a nice looking young man. He is ordered to Governor’s Island, which will be his quarters for the present.

On Saturday Mrs. Losee brought to our house a young clergyman a Mr. Merrill, who she said might perhaps yet be the minister at the Presbyterian church in Roslyn.² He is a little man, hard of hearing, with a not very pleasant voice and a slip-shod articulation. He preached yesterday, and his sermon was not ill written.

We have had a week of beautiful weather. Love to Julia and Minna. I have Julia’s second letter³ for which I am much obliged to her.

Yours ever,

W. C. BRYANT.

P.S. The Hendersons are at Sugar Loaf.

W. C. B.
1. Cyrus Bryant’s third son; see 1078.1.
2. Rev. Samuel R. Ely remained the pastor of the Roslyn Presbyterian Church until 1870, when he was succeeded in turn by W. W. Kirby and Charles R. Strong. Goddard, Roslyn Harbor, p. 106.
3. Unrecovered.

1558. To Frances F. Bryant

New York, August 15, 1865.

My dear Frances,

I came again to town this morning and expect to pass the night at West Point. The weather has been delightful for the past week or more.

Yesterday Miss Lilla Sawin\(^1\) came down and took up her quarters at Mr. Cline’s. Miss Jerusha Dewey is expected on Thursday and the two other sisters a few days later. I hear that they are all pretty well.

A terrible affair has occurred in Wall Street which makes a great commotion. The firm of Morris Ketchum and Son has failed—but mere failure to pay is not the worst of it. The son Edward, Mr. Ketchum’s favorite son, is charged with having forged certain certificates purporting to be issued by the banks, to the amount of more than two millions of dollars, which he is said to have made use of in the purchase of stocks—a species of transactions from which his father abstained. Gambling in the stocks, in this manner he is supposed to have involved himself in great losses, and this led to new forgeries. The firm paid those certificates till they amounted to considerably over two hundred thousand dollars and then stopped—finding no end of them. It is a frightful case. The young man enjoyed the best reputation.\(^2\)

Godwin has just told me that the man who hired his house now wants to give it up, and that probably he should take it back to be let again.

Yours ever

W. C. BRYANT.
family during his imprisonment—which he thought excessive and contrary to law—see Letters 1648, 1771, and 1866, and EP, March 9, 17, April 3, 8, 13, 16, 1868.

1559. To Frances F. Bryant

New York August
17th. 1865. Thursday—

My dear Frances,

I have just returned from West Point, where I have passed two nights—going up on Tuesday afternoon. Mrs. Pell had written you a note which you shall have when you get back inviting you to her house, but had not yet sent it. The country there is parched by drought, and an unheard of thing has happened—there are some cases of fever and ague.

I have seen Mr. Ely this morning. He says he brought letters from you and left them at Roslyn—and that he thought you would come by the beginning of next week—that you were quite strong and cheerful and so were the rest of the party. If you think you will enjoy yourself better there than at Roslyn I would have you stay of course, though I shall be glad to have you all back. The old place is quite solitary and were it not that I have a little literary task on my hands, the days would be very tedious.¹ I hear from Cummington that the carpenters are going on very well—a dozen or more hands being at work on the house.

I shall write you again tomorrow. Love to Julia and Minna.

Yours ever

W. C. Bryant

MANUSCRIPT: NYPL–GR
ADDRESS: Mrs. F. F. Bryant.

¹ It is uncertain what “literary task” Bryant may have had in mind just then. Possibly he had received a letter from London written him ten days earlier telling him that the widow of Parliamentary free trade leader Richard Cobden, who had died in April 1865, wished to publish a volume of her husband’s writings in both Great Britain and the United States, and wished Bryant, “as a free trader no less than as a distinguished man of letters,” to write an introduction to the American edition. F. W. Chesson to Bryant, August 7, 1865, NYPL–BG. Bryant was asked to procure an American publisher for the volume, which he apparently did, for it appeared as The Political Writings of Richard Cobden in two volumes (London and New York, 1867), with a nine-paragraph introduction by Bryant.

The only purely literary composition Bryant seems to have undertaken in the latter part of 1865 was the poem “A Legend of St. Martin,” uncollected until it appeared posthumously in his Poetical Works (1883), II, 333–335.
1560.  To Frances F. Bryant

New York, August 18th  1865
Friday morning.  Office of
the Evening Post

Dear Frances,

I write from Roslyn—though the date says New York.
Miss Dewey came last night with me in the boat—although she
had written to Miss Sawin to say that she should not come at that time.
So there was nobody ready for her, and she had to stay at your house.
Miss Mary who does not recover so fast as she, is to come down with
Mrs. Ensign by and by when she is better. Miss Dewey brought with
her a servant—a young girl the daughter of a respectable Irish family
in the country.

I find every thing going on well here, though the earth is dry and
the roads very dusty and every body waiting for rain.

The affairs at the office I think are in a fair way of arrangement,
but the story is rather a long one—too long for a letter.  I think we
shall satisfy Nordhoff and the others by giving them a certain portion of the profits without making them partners.1 Meantime I am glad
that you are all enjoying yourselves so well, and shall be delighted to
see you back.

Yours ever

W  C  BRYANT

manuscript:  NYPL–GR
address:  Mrs  F  F. Bryant.

1. Charles Nordhoff (1451.2) was the managing editor of the EP.

1561.  To John Bigelow

Roslyn, Long Island  Aug. 28th  1865

My dear Mr. Bigelow.

I write to express the deep sympathy with which Frances and
myself have heard of the calamity which has befallen you and Mrs.
Bigelow in the loss of a beloved and promising child. Upon her the
blow must have fallen with a peculiar severity, inasmuch as she left
him in full health, and with what must have seemed to her the certainty
of meeting him, after a brief absence, on her return.

I have never had the misfortune of losing a child, but I can easily
conceive of the bitterness of the cup which has been put to your lips.
In such a sorrow the only consolation is to be found in the firm belief
of a continued existence beyond the grave. Do you remember that
beautiful paper of Charles Lamb entitled the “Child Angel”[?] 1 The
immature mind and moral nature, early, and as it might seem, prematurely withdrawn from this stage of being, find nourishment and growth under a gentler discipline, and are reared to the angelic stature without the interposition of those sorrows and dangers from which we delight to believe that the abodes of the good in the next world are free.

We were exceedingly sorry not to see Mrs. Bigelow during her visit to this country. Passing the greater part of my time in the country, it happened that when she was in town I was not, and we were disappointed of the pleasure which we had promised ourselves and which she gave us leave to expect, of seeing her at our home in the country.

Mrs. Bryant and Julia desire their love to you both.

I am, dear sir,
truly yours,

W. C. Bryant.


1562. To M. R. Moore

Roslyn Long Island Aug. 30, 1865.

My dear Madam.

I thank you for the great honor you have done me in giving my name to one of the venerable trees in the Mammoth Grove of California.\(^1\) I hope that the tree which you find vigorous and flourishing will be none the worse for it.

The portion of the bark which you were so kind as to send me, as well as the cone and seeds reached me safely through the kindness of Mr. Brown.\(^2\) The seeds shall be committed to the ground in the hope that they will sprout in due season; the cone and the bark are placed among my curiosities.

I do not much wonder that in naming these trees, political and military celebrities should be first thought of. The events of the last four years have kept the public attention fixed upon the actors on our political stage, and the gallant deeds of our commanders in the war have, for the moment at least thrown all other kinds of fame into the shade. That I should be the first of our poets whose name is inscribed on one of these giants of the forest is an honor which, I fear, if it had been left to the arbitration of public opinion, instead of the partiality of an individual, would not have been awarded to me. Perhaps, however, the length of time, during which I have been before the
public as an author—more than half a century—had its weight with
you in connecting my name with one of the most remarkable produc-
tions of your magnificent country.

And really it is a most magnificent region that you inhabit,—with
a genial and charming climate, scenery amazingly beautiful and a
vegetation of wonderful richness and vigor. In certain respects your
climate resembles, in others surpasses that of the same latitude in the
old world. May you find in that region when your social relations shall
have taken a permanent form, a nobler Europe—freer, more virtuous
and more happy.

Thanking you for the kind wishes expressed at the close of your
very obliging letter,

I am madam
very truly and faithfully yours
W. C. BRYANT.

MANUSCRIPT: NYPL–GR (draft) ADDRESS: To Mrs. M. R. Moore of San Francisco

1. Mrs. Moore had written Bryant from San Francisco on July 17, 1865 (Life, II,
232–233) that, visiting the “Mammoth Grove” (now Sequoia National Park, in eastern
California) recently, she had been involuntarily reminded of the first line of Bryant’s
“A Forest Hymn”: “The groves were God’s first temples.” Seeing many trees named
for statesmen and generals, but none for a poet, she had learned that she need only
provide a marble tablet appropriately lettered, and a tree might be so named. She
selected, near the entrance of the grove, “a very old tree, one of the largest, and one
that has not only braved the storms of centuries, but which has felt the scourge of the
savage-fire.” It was, she continued, “a splendid specimen of a green old age, still
strong, still fresh, the birds singing in its lofty top, a fitting emblem of the poet of the
forest, Bryant.” Mrs. Moore has not been further identified.

2. Unidentified.

1563. To F. W. Chesson

Roslyn Aug 31 1865

Dear sir.

I am glad that Mr. Cobden’s able pamphlets are to be collected
and published. I will undertake to write an introduction to them,
though Mr. Cobden’s reputation here is such that the publication
would derive but small advantage from any thing that I could say in
its honor.1 I would suggest the firm of D. Appleton & Co. of New
York as suitable publishers. The head of the firm is a friend of
freedom of trade. If the work should not be put in his hands there are
the Brothers Harper, who are booksellers on a very large scale.

As you say nothing of the size of the publication, I could not well
say what should be the maximum price—nor could the number likely
to be sold be estimated without seeing the collection so as to judge
whether the subjects treated in the majority of the pamphlets will be
likely to interest an American public. . . .

MANUSCRIPT: NYPL–GR (draft) ADDRESS: F. W. Chesson Esq / Morning Star [copy?].
1. See 1559.1.

1564. To Laura G. Pugh

New York, August 31, 1865
Office of the Evening Post

Dear Madam.

I very cheerfully consent to the use you desire to make of the two
poems mentioned in your note. In most cases those who desire to
make selections from what I have written for any compilation which
they have in hand do so without asking me, and in fact it is a
compliment they pay me, rather than an injury. I shall regard your
copying the poems into your collection, simply as a flattering proof of
your good opinion, and only hope that their appearance in your
volume will detract nothing from its reputation.

I regret to learn from you that you have been so great a sufferer
by the events of the late war and shall be happy to hear of the success
of your book.

I am, madam,
very respectfully yours
W. C. BRYANT.

MANUSCRIPT: UVa ADDRESS: Mrs. Laura G. Pugh / Frankfurt, Kentucky.
1. Unidentified.
2. No publication by Mrs. Pugh has been identified.

1565. To Charles F. Adams

New York, September 14, 1865
Office of The Evening Post

My dear sir.

At the request of my friend Wilson G. Hunt Esq. of this city, I
give this letter to George H. Mumford Esq. of Rochester in this state,
who, with his family, is about to travel in the old world. He is a lawyer
of distinction in the western part of our state, and greatly esteemed
for his personal character by those who have the pleasure of his
acquaintance.

I am, sir,
with great regard
truly yours,
W. C. BRYANT.
1. Adams (634.6), an earlier political associate of Bryant's, had been Minister to Great Britain since 1861.
2. See 944.1.
3. Not further identified.

1566. To Frances F. Bryant

[New York?] Sept. 21, 1865.

Dear Frances.

I send you a hundred dollars and your umbrella repaired. I hope you and Miss Burghardt will have a good journey and a pleasant visit.¹

Yours ever

W. C. B.

1. It is uncertain whom Frances was going to visit. Miss Burghardt is unidentified.

1567. To William Dennison¹

[Roslyn] October 3, 1865.

The Undersigned, inhabitants of Roslyn and its neighborhood in Queens County Long Island respectfully represent

That the mail accommodations for this village and its vicinity are very imperfect and inadequate in comparison with those of the places around them.

The mail by the present arrangement leaves Roslyn at half past eight o'clock in the morning. It is conveyed to Mineola only five miles off on the Long Island Rail road. It remains there until nearly half past five in the afternoon when it is conveyed to New York by an afternoon train. It reaches New York too late for the northern eastern and western mails; they have all cleared before its arrival.

This is perhaps the worst arrangement which could be made for this neighborhood. It compels us to get our letters to the post office at an inconvenient hour. When it gets possession of them it does not take them to New York in season either for the business hours of the day or if they go farther than New York, for the principal mails leaving the city.

The consequence is that we are obliged in all matters which require despatch to get our letters to New York by private conveyance or go to town ourselves. The mails are but a slight accommodation to us. If there were no government post office we could accommodate ourselves infinitely better by an express.

The mail arrives at Roslyn between ten and eleven o'clock in the
morning from New York. We cannot send an answer to the letters which we receive on the same day, but are obliged to wait till the next morning and then answer them by a mail which does not arrive in New York till late the next day or the evening so that we are sometimes obliged either to send them by private conveyance or go ourselves to answer in person.

Formerly the mail left Roslyn in the afternoon at one or two o’clock, or thereabouts, so that the letters received were answered the same day and the answer reached New York in the hours devoted to business and if their destination was out of New York, in time for all the afternoon mails, or at all events in time for the next morning’s mails. This arrangement was satisfactory and suited the general convenience. We do not for our part understand why it was changed, nor do we see any objection to restoring it.

We therefore respectfully request your attention to these great defects in the present arrangement for conveying the Roslyn mail, and ask that such changes may be made as will accommodate those for whose benefit the government post office was instituted. . . .

1. William Dennison (1815–1882), Republican Governor of Ohio, 1859–1861, served as Postmaster General of the United States from 1864 to 1866.

2. There are no signatures attached to this draft letter in Bryant's holograph. No reply has been recovered.

1568. To Francis James Child

New York, October 11th 1865.

Dear Mr. Child,

I shall be proud of the honor you propose to do my verses and if you had done it without referring the matter to me, I should only have taken it as a compliment. Only, when you copy “The Cloud on the Way,” which a French translator has entitled “Le Nuage qui Passe,” please to correct one line, in which the typesetter has omitted a word and spoiled the metre. It is on the 76th page of my “Thirty Poems,” in the sixth line from the top. For

When thou hast passed &c.

read

When thou once hast passed &c.

Meantime I am very glad that you are contemplating a second edition of your collection, inasmuch as it implies that the public has had the good taste to buy up the first.
I infer, from the way in which you mention Mrs. Child, that she is well. Please thank her, for me and my wife, for her kind remembrance of us.¹

I am, dear sir, 
faithfully yours,  
W. C. BRYANT.

MANUSCRIPT: HCL ADDRESS: Prof. F. J. Child.

1. Francis James Child (1825–1896, Harvard 1846), a philologist and editor of Chaucer and Spenser, had succeeded Edward Tyrell Channing (54.1), Bryant’s early friend and counselor, as Boylston Professor of Rhetoric at his alma mater. From 1876 until his death he was a widely influential professor of English and the collector in five volumes of *English and Scottish Popular Ballads* (1883–1898).

2. Child had written on October 7 (NYPL–BG) asking Bryant’s permission to print several of his poems in a second edition of Child’s *Poems of Religious Sorrow, Comfort, Counsel, and Aspiration* (Boston and New York, 1866, 1886), confessing at the same time that he had used three Bryant poems in the first edition without asking Bryant’s leave to do so.


4. In 1860 Child had married Elizabeth Ellery Sedgwick, daughter of Bryant’s early friends Robert and Elizabeth Sedgwick.

1569. To George Harvey

Roslyn, Long Island Oct 20th 1865.

My dear Mr. Harvey.

I return you my best thanks for the beautiful landscape in water colors, which you have had the kindness to send me. It seems to me to be executed with great vigor and effect and I prize it highly. It arrived in good order and is now at the frame makers whence it will be transferred to the walls of the room in which I am sitting.²

I was sure that you would rejoice greatly at the fortunate termination of our war, the suppression of the rebellion and the downfall[1] of slavery. You have always been a true friend of our country without losing your attachment to the land of your birth, and accordingly have earnestly desired the two countries should live in amity with each other. There is no reason why they should not if both took care to avoid occasions of offence, but this I think you admit that the governing class in Great Britain failed to do during the late civil war. This has left a feeling of injury in the minds of Americans which will last for some time—though I suppose it will, if no new occasion of difference arises, pass away as every thing of the kind does with our people.

We are puzzled what to make of your Fenians. The organization does not seem to us strong enough either in men or means to entertain
serious thoughts of an Irish revolution, yet so far as they are disclosed their designs appear to be revolutionary.³

Here in America we are earnestly occupied with the problem of restoring the revolted states to their place in the Union. There is more perplexity in settling the new questions to which this gives birth, than there was in dealing with these states while in rebellion, and there is a considerable difference of opinion as to the best mode of accomplishing the object. For my part, I hope the thing will be done with as little exercise of arbitrary power by the federal government as possible.

I am, dear sir,
very truly yours.
W. C. BRYANT.

MANUSCRIPT: Minneapolis Public Library and Information Center
ADDRESS: Geo. Harvey Esq.

1. English landscape painter and monetary theorist who had lived and worked in the United States. See 553.2.
2. This picture has not been identified.
3. For a further discussion between Bryant and Harvey of this Irish revolutionary movement, see Letter 1600.

1570. To Austin Bryant

Roslyn October 22d 1865.—

Dear Brother.

The other day when Mr. Freeman and his wife Arthur's daughter¹ were here, I was informed by her that since your accident by which some of your ribs were broken you had experienced certain symptoms resembling those of the heart disease and that the physician whom you consulted told you that you had an organic disease of the heart and that your spirits were considerably depressed in consequence.²

There is scarce any disease in regard to the existence of which physicians are so much in the dark as this. When I was in Naples in the year 1858 I made the acquaintance of an old and eminent physician of Boston, since dead, Dr. Hayward,³ who had been so long in practice that he remembered my father. Talking of the heart disease, he said that physicians were often mistaken in affirming this disease to exist in their patients. All the "rational symptoms" of it, he said, may be present when there is no organic disease of the heart, and the way we know that is so, is that the patient gets well and the physician finds himself mistaken.

I thought you might like to know this. Dr. Hayward was a physician of great experience and one who kept pace with the improvements made in his art.
Thy Task Is Done

We are all in our usual health except my wife, who just now is shut up in the house with a very severe cold. Fanny is not yet quite recovered from the effects of the injury she received on the railroad last Spring. The fall season has been rather pleasant though dry. We have had no frost severe enough to hurt in the least the tenderest plants in our garden.

Kind regards to all your household. My wife desires to add hers.

Yours affectionately

W. C. B.

MANUSCRIPT: NYPL–GR ADDRESS: To Austin Bryant Esq. of Princeton Illinois.

1. In 1861 Arthur Bryant's eldest daughter Ellen Aurelia (b. 1839) had married Clement Freeman (1827–1898).

2. Cullen's elder brother Austin had been chronically ill for at least eight years; see Letter 970. Early in 1865 his condition was aggravated when he was kicked by a horse. He died three months after this letter was written, his death being attributed to dropsy. The Bryant Record for 1895–96–97–98, Being the Proceedings of the Bryant Association, at Its First Four Annual Reunions, Held at Princeton, Illinois (Princeton, Illinois: Published by the Association, 1898), p. 45.

3. Probably George Hayward (1791–1863, Harvard 1809, M.D. Pennsylvania 1812), professor of surgery at Harvard Medical School, 1835–1849. He was the first to employ ether during a major operation.

1571. To S. Sarah Folsom

[Roslyn?] Nov. 6, 1865

My dear friend,

I was in great danger of being made vain by your letter and the accompanying verses—commending so warmly what I have done as an author. I am glad that you did not send me the verses last year, and that you have sent them now when I can enjoy them by themselves. They are written with a graceful simplicity which is quite charming, and which deserves a better subject.

My wife desires me to present to you her very kind remembrances.

With many thanks for your letter and for the verses which have only been kept back to make them the more welcome,

I am, dear Madam,
very truly and cordially yours

W. C. BRYANT

MANUSCRIPT: NYPL–GR (draft) ADDRESS: To Mrs. S. Sarah Folsom / Cambridge Mass.

1. Mrs. Folsom was the wife of Charles Folsom, Bryant's co-editor on the United States Review in 1826–1827. See Volume I, 16.

2. On November 3 Mrs. Folsom had written Bryant (NYPL–GR) enclosing verses
celebrating his seventieth birthday. The verses were not, of course, included in The Bryant Festival at "The Century," (1865), which had been published earlier, and the manuscript is unrecovered.

1572.  To Sarah Sigourney Rice

New York, November 6, 1865
Office of The Evening Post

Dear Madam:

I am very unwilling to do anything which may seem disobliging, yet I cannot comply with the request in your note. A poem I could not furnish, for I never write verses for particular occasions except when spontaneously prompted to it, nor do I see how I can co-operate in your design in any other manner.

My difficulty arises from the personal character of Edgar A. Poe, of which I have in my time heard too much to be able to join in paying especial honor to his memory. Persons younger than myself who have heard less of the conduct to which I refer may take a different view of the matter, and certainly, I do not intend to censure them for doing so. I think, however, that there should be some decided element of goodness in the character of those to whom a public monument directs the attention of the world. I am sure that you will take that expression of my views in as good part as it is intended.

I am, madam, very respectfully yours.

W. C. Bryant.


1. Miss Rice, a teacher of elocution in the Baltimore public schools, led an effort by members of the School Teachers Association of that city to raise a monument on the grave of Edgar Allen Poe, in the burial ground of the First Presbyterian Church, at Fayette and Greene Streets, Baltimore.

2. Unrecovered.

3. For evidence of Bryant's personal acquaintance with Poe, see Letter 595; Life, II, 22n. Despite Bryant's reluctance, expressed here, to honor Poe's memory in verse, a decade later he did accede to a request from Miss Rice to compose an epitaph for the monument finally erected over Poe's grave. See Letter 2273.

1573. To Julia M. Sands

New York  Nov. 11th. 1865

My dear Miss Sands.

The chair of which you speak I bought of Stephen W. Smith, maker of hobby horses, at 90 William Street. The price I have forgot-
ten and have no bill of it yet—but it was enough, I think, and Mr. Johnson promises to get Mr. Smith’s Circular with his prices and send it to you.

Very truly yours
W. C. BRYANT.

MANUSCRIPT: PUL ADDRESS: Miss J. M Sands.

1574. To Frances F. Bryant

Dear Frances.

I got here at a quarter before 3 in the afternoon—having been detained by the fog—principally in Flushing Bay. The boat does not go out until half past three—but Mr. Johnston is not here to attend to the lamp.

Yours ever
W. C. B.

MANUSCRIPT: NYPL–GR ADDRESS: Mrs. F. F. Bryant.

1575. To William G. Simms

My dear Mr. Simms.

I was glad to hear again from you the other day, and would have answered your note earlier, but I live in the country and could not consequently be here to get copies of my books till now. I write this to inquire if you are still at the St. Nicholas Hotel, and if you are, I shall send such of the books as are yet in print to your address. I was much concerned to hear of the burning of your house and the loss of your library.

I am sir,
very truly yours
W. C. BRYANT.


1. On November 10 Simms had written Bryant from the St. Nicholas Hotel in New York (NYPL–BG) that he had not changed as a person or friend (they had first met in 1832; see 326.13), but “self-respect forbids that we should put ourselves in any equivocal attitude, and I must await, and cannot seek my conquerors, albeit the friends of ancient days.”

2. In 1865 Union troops had burned Simms’s South Carolina home, “Wood-
lands," containing his library; he had, he wrote, lost Bryant's books with the poet's autographs, and asked whether Bryant might provide any new ones.

1576. To Edwin D. Morgan

New York, December 4th 1865
Office of The Evening Post

My dear sir,

The bearer of this note is O. W. Pollitz Esq. a most respectable merchant of this city and an American citizen,¹ who wishes to confer with you concerning the Consulship at Hamburg, which his friends are soliciting for him and for which in my judgment he is particularly well qualified.²

I am, sir,
very truly yours,
W. C. BRYANT.


1. See 1302.6.
2. Pollitz failed of this appointment, according to information received from the Office of the Historian, United States Department of State.

1577. To S. Bryant¹

Roslyn Dec 7th 1865

Dear sir,

I cannot do what you request of me for several reasons.²
I am too old to occupy myself with such matters, which if I were to comply with every request made to me, would seriously encroach upon my time.—

If this were not the case, I have long made it a rule not to write verses for particular occasions except when I find myself strongly moved to do so.

You see therefore that in declining to comply with your request I only do what I am obliged to do in other cases.

I am glad to infer from your letter that your domestic life has been a happy one. I hope it will continue to be as little clouded by calamity as Providence shall see to be wholesome for you.

As to the relationship of which you speak it is not unlikely that there may be a distant one between us. My family were from Bridgewater not distant from Plympton. Hoping that you and your wife may see the fiftieth anniversary of your wedding day I am sir

W C B.
1. Identified only as in descriptive note below.
2. No letter or other form of request from Rev. Bryant has been recovered.

1578. **To Reginald A. Parker**

Roslyn, Long Island
December 7th. 1865

My dear Mr. Parker

We were all very glad to hear from you again, directly, by your pleasant letter of the 9th of November, and particularly to be told of your prosperity. That you are employed as the Agent of our Government implies a professional reputation above the common— I infer too that you have quite as many things in charge as you can well attend to— It is remarked here that a lawyer has generally either too much business or too little— From what I have seen in Mr. Edwin Field's office, I should judge that it might be so in London, and that one who is successful in the profession might, as a general rule be overworked— For my part, I am taking life easy—though I believe you will bear me witness that I never allowed it to sit very heavily upon me. I am now comparatively little occupied with the Evening Post, passing the greater part of my time in the Country— The neighborhood is charming, so far at least as nature is concerned. Here I plant trees and shrubs and improve my grounds in various ways and now and then put up a new building or remodel an old one. Do you never think of revisiting your old haunts on this side of the Atlantic? Shall the places which knew you know you no more? Take a Summer's vacation and cross the great deep, & see what we have been doing since you left us— I shall be most happy to be your host as long as you can content yourself at this place.

Your old ramble on New York island—what is left of it—has become the Central Park, one of the most beautiful spots of its kind that the sun ever looked upon, and the City has crept up to it and now flanks it on the east and the west. The dwellinghouses built since your time here are much more lofty and spacious than those which the New Yorkers then inhabited, and New York may now be called a very well built city.

I am glad to hear that your health is so good; perhaps it is all the better for pretty laborious occupation. My own is excellent although I have reached the age when infirmities thicken upon one. My wife is as she was in England, a little better, but still quite delicate, and Julia is not quite so well as I could wish. Fanny has a house here beside mine, and another in town upon what you may remember as Murray Hill,
now built up with stately mansions. Her eldest children a boy and a
girl are grown up & the boy has just entered College at our Cambridge.

This is the day appointed by the President & the Governor of
New York as a day of general thanksgiving. We are all rejoicing at
the suppression of the rebellion, and the return of peace, & the extinction
of slavery— The great opprobrium of our Country is effaced for
ever—the amendment of our Constitution just now adopted by the
requisite number of states, putting it out of the power of any state to
restore it. As to the dispute which we have with your Country it does
not seem to me to be in a state which promises an early settlement.
Your government flatly rejects our claim; our government insists upon
it. Mr. Cushing will effect nothing, nor Mr. Adams either—but there
will be no war. Only, if the opportunity occurs, our Government will
put Earl Russell’s doctrine in force against British Commerce. 3

My wife and I were very glad to learn the particulars you give
concerning your family. My wife and Julia desire their very kind
regards.

I am dear Sir
faithfully yours
W. C. BRYANT

P.S. Excuse the dainty paper on which this letter is written. It was
a present from the Appletons, my publishers.

W. C. B.

MANUSCRIPT: NYPL–GR (draft, and fair copy in unidentified holograph) ADDRESS:
R A Parker Esqre / 41 Bedford Row / London.

1. Reginald A. Parker (384.3), an early friend of Bryant’s, was a London lawyer.
2. Parker had written Bryant from London on November 9 (NYPL–BG), report-
ing on his seven children and the death of his wife in 1858, and stating that he was
now engaged as an agent for the American government in claims against “warlike
stores” once held by the Confederate government.
3. The steamship Alabama was one of several cruisers, built in British shipyards
and manned by British crews under Confederate officers, which ravaged American
merchant shipping during the Civil War. When, at the war’s end, the United States
demanded monetary damages from Great Britain and suggested arbitration proceed-
ings, the British Prime Minister, Lord John Russell (548.1) refused the proposal.
Although the American negotiators Caleb Cushing (156.4), legal consultant to Secre-
tary of State Seward, and Charles Francis Adams (634.6), American minister to Great
Britain, pressed these claims, they were not settled satisfactorily until 1872. Van
Deusen, Seward, 497–500, 510.

1579. To M. N. Gaubart1

Dear sir.

The number of persons within the sphere of my acquaintance
who are competent to translate from the French is large, and the
Thy Task Is Done

chance of employment for any of them is small. All that I could do for any person desiring to be employed in that way would be, after looking at such testimonials as he might lay before me, to give him a letter to some publisher. I will do that for you if you choose, but I must tell you that my recommendations avail little with the booksellers. They do not bite at any bait which I throw out to them; they are a wary race, and require somebody to judge for them who adopts a severe standard and can give his opinion privately without fear of offense.

I am sir
respectfully yours
W. C. B.

MANUSCRIPT: NYPL–GR (draft) ADDRESS: M. N Gaubart / Morristown New Jersey.

1. Unidentified. The NUC lists no titles under his name; no letter from him to Bryant has been recovered.

1580. To Ellis Ames¹

[Roslyn?] December [13] 1865

For the monument of William Baylies of West Bridgewater, Massachusetts — Born at Dighton Sept 17 1776 — Died Taunton Sept 27 1865.—

This Stone commemorates
The Virtues of One
Pure alike in private and in public life,
And honored and beloved in both:
An upright statesman, a persuasive orator
An able and learned lawyer
And a prudent and faithful counsellor
Sincere in word and purpose,
Calm and kind in temper,
Equitable in judgment, wise in action:
Who never lent his great talents
To aid injustice
And abhorred the gain which is acquired
By making the worse appear the better cause.
He lived a long, useful and spotless life,
And left a noble example
To the generation that comes after him

W. C. B.—²
Dec. 1865
manuscripts: NYPL–GR (fair copy and two drafts).

1. On December 9, 1865, Ellis Ames (Letters 13, 28), with whom Bryant had lived while studying law in 1815 under William Baylies (Volume I, 14), had written Bryant from Canton, Massachusetts, enclosing a copy of his obituary of Baylies, and asking for an inscription of eighteen or twenty lines for his gravestone. On December 19 Ames wrote again, thanking Bryant for his “beautiful inscription.” Ames’ letters are in NYPL–GR and NYPL–BG.

2. In an obituary notice in the EP soon after Baylies’ death Bryant had given a more intimate account of his teacher’s personality, writing that “he was a man of imposing presence, kindly manners, and a close observer of character. His memory was stored with anecdotes of remarkable persons, the relation of which at times made him very entertaining. His tastes and habits of life were exceedingly simple, though his fortune was liberal, and his disposition of his income generous. He had a supreme contempt for the tricks of his profession, and for all indirect practices, and few lawyers ever exercised their profession so exempt from complaint and criticism.” Quoted in Life, 1, 120n.

1581. To William Leete Stone, Jr.¹ [Roslyn?] December 15, 1865

My dear Sir.

I had hoped that the affair to which you refer had been utterly forgotten to be spoken of no more. I allowed myself to be betrayed into an absurd personal quarrel which had no special object and a most disagreeable termination—but that was long ago and I have been wiser ever since. The filial piety which induces you to exonerate your father from the share which I supposed he took in it, does you honor but I am exceedingly pained to learn that it is to be ascribed to Sands, from whom, considering the friendly and intimate footing on which we stood I could not have expected it.² I must, however, accept your account of the matter which although I hoped I had got rid of any rancor left on my mind by the affair, makes me think more kindly of your father. . . .

manuscript: NYPL–GR (draft).

1. Stone (1835–1908, Brown 1858), a journalist, and editor and compiler of American Revolutionary history, was the son of Bryant’s early journalistic adversary William Leete Stone (80.3). Writing Bryant on December 9, he had urged him to dismiss “the least hard feeling [you have] toward Mr. Stone” on account of “the attack you once made on my father for the article which you, at the time, supposed he wrote.” “I am now preparing a sketch of my father’s life and writings,” he continued, “and in the course of my examination of his private MSS & papers, I find that the article which induced you to take that course was written, not by him, but by [Robert] Sands.” NYPL–GR.

2. For an account of the horsewhipping which Bryant had administered to the senior Stone in April 1831, see Letter 222.
1582. To John Howard Bryant

New York, Dec. 19, 1865
Office of The Evening Post

Dear Brother

I send you the two notes of which you speak.¹ I have no other of yours.

Compute the interest for yourself and pay me as you propose—only letting me know what part is interest and what is principal that I may put down the interest as income. Do not forget this if you please.

Yours affectionately,

W. C. BRYANT


1. No letter from John Bryant touching on this matter has been found.

1583. To John Howard Bryant

[Roslyn?] Dec 29th. 1865

Dear Brother.

I have just received the funds and draft to pay for the notes I sent you. I do not care to compute the interest—If you are satisfied I am.

I heard from our friends at Gilsum the other day by a letter from Eunice Fish. They all are pretty well, except Abigail who is in the Lunatic Asylum, as comfortable as she could be anywhere—a hopeless case, and Emma Hayward who is passing away with a consumption. The letter brought me a photograph of our aunt Fish.¹

The carpenters at the house in Cummington are at work yet and I hope will have it done by spring. It ought to be a pretty grand house for it will cost enough. I have bought another spring of Ellis who owns the Snell place and have agreed to straighten the north half of the line between the farms.² At the southeast corner of the farm going towards Mr. Dawes’s is a school house which I have given a little money to have improved—or rather replaced by a new one. . . .³

MANUSCRIPT: NYPL–GR (draft).

1. For Bryant’s cousins, the Fish family of Gilsum, New Hampshire, see Letters 465, 472.

2. From 1858 to 1870 Samuel Ellis (1802–1875), a farmer, owned the homestead of Bryant’s grandfather Ebenezer Snell (Volume I, [9]), adjoining the Bryant homestead to the west. Only One Cummington, p. 355; Vital Records of Cummington, p. 191. In 1870 Bryant bought the Snell property from Ellis; it was known thereafter as the “Upper Bryant Place.”
3. The Bryant Schoolhouse (see illustration), built in 1867 to replace an earlier building of School District Number Ten at the corner of Route 112 and Trow Road, was in use at that location until 1921, when it was moved across the Westfield River and became a dormitory at the girls' Belgian Village Camp. *Only One Cummington*, pp. 45, 351.

1584. *To Catharine M. Sedgwick* [Roslyn?] Dec 29 1865

Dear Miss Sedgwick.

I have just received your letter—and as you may imagine with exceeding pleasure, for I supposed, from what I had heard, that you were just now too ill to write. I had been talking with my wife only a day or two since about writing to you—and here I find that you are beforehand with me. When I read in your letter that you had a bad cold, I was on the point of saying that I was glad of it—for when my wife was recovering from the fever she had in Naples, one of the accompaniments to a return to a natural state of health was the liability to be affected that way. When she had her first cold I was delighted.

Since I last wrote to you we have had another great event to be thankful for—the adoption of the amendment of our constitution which blots out that opprobrium of our land forever. It is a great thing to have lived at a time when so magnificent an act of justice has been done—it were worth living for even were there no hereafter. How different it is to live now and behold these signs of progress, from what it was to live in those ages when civilization was giving out in the decline of the Roman empire when the shadows of barbarism seemed closing over the world.

I have been reading the *Life* and *Letters* of the Revd. F. W. Robertson—one of the liberal divines of the English Church—a Catholic Christian of the true sort and have been much... 3

**Manuscript:** NYPL-GR (incomplete draft) published (*in part*): *Life*, II, 236–237.

1. Miss Sedgwick had written Bryant on December 27 (NYPL-BG) that she still found reading the *EP* a "daily enjoyment."

2. Amendment XIII to the Federal Constitution, proposed by Congress on January 31, 1865, had been ratified by the required three-quarters of the states by December 18. Its unequivocal principal clause states simply: "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States or any place subject to their jurisdiction." Commenting in the *EP* the day after its ratification, Bryant pointed out, "It is now more than thirty years since the *Evening Post* began to demand that the Federal Government should clear itself of all responsibility for the existence of slavery in the States." A few months later he composed a poem of exultation, "The Death of Slavery," published in the *Atlantic Monthly* for July 1866. See *Poems* (1876), pp. 447–449.