Bryant's Correspondents  
1836–1849

Between March 1836 and March 1849 Bryant seems to have written something over 400 letters, of which 352 appear in this volume. While a growing number acknowledge invitations to read a poem or deliver a lecture, or requests for an autograph or literary advice, or notifications of election to honorary membership in college literary societies, they do not yet comprise an appreciable portion of his total correspondence, as they would in later years when his standing was firmly established as the patriarch of American poets.

Some of Bryant's earlier correspondents are no longer represented, either through death, as with his father, sister Sally, Samuel Howe, and Henry and Theodore Sedgwick II, or because a once significant literary association had been ended, as in the case of Theophilus Parsons, Jared Sparks, and Charles Folsom. Others largely missing from these pages are friends for whom he felt a continuing affection but no longer found occasion to see often or address more than infrequently. Among these are William Baylies, Willard Phillips, Edward Channing, Charles Sedgwick, and Gulian Verplanck. The one early acquaintance with whom Bryant continued an uninterrupted, if somewhat irregular, correspondence, was Richard Henry Dana, a staunch friend to whom he confided his trials and occasional triumphs, whose advice he sought in revising his poems for republication, and whom he managed to see whenever he visited the Boston area or Dana came to New York. The number of his recovered letters to Dana has grown from twenty-eight in the first period to forty-five in the present one.

Cullen and Frances Bryant were now more often separated in the summer months, and—after they had bought a country home in 1842—during Bryant's weekday preoccupation in the city with his newspaper, when they had frequent reason to exchange notes. In 1845 Bryant took his first long trip abroad without his wife, and, as he had in 1836 when she remained in Heidelberg after his hasty return to New York, he wrote to her often and at length. Thus, his letters to Frances during the present period form the most numerous unit; sixty-four have been recovered and appear herein. Bryant's daughters were now old enough to read, or at least to enjoy receiving, letters from their father—Julia was not yet five when he began addressing her in Italian, a language in which she had quickly learned to chatter, but not yet to decipher. He wrote to the girls quite often in the languages they were studying, in a deliberate effort to stimulate their continued interest. There are twenty-three letters to Fanny and Julia during this period, and many more short notes to Julia in Italian, embraced in letters to her mother. There are none to Fanny, however, after her marriage in 1842.

Following Bryant's first visit to Illinois in 1832, and especially after his second journey there in 1841, his youngest brother, John, became his agent in land investment in the West, and Cullen's main channel of communication with the rest of his family at Princeton. While only two letters to Cyrus
Bryant during this period have been recovered, and none to Austin or Arthur, or to Cullen's mother or his sister Charity Olds, fifteen to John Bryant are included here.

After his wife and Dana, Bryant wrote most often during 1836–1849 to the *Evening Post*. Only four of his travel letters had been printed therein during his residence in Europe in 1834–1836; in five months of 1845 he sent thirteen to his newspaper while traveling rapidly across Great Britain and the Continent. And on two visits to Illinois and one to the South, as well as on several shorter journeys through the northeastern states between 1841 and 1847, he found his letters an increasingly popular feature in the paper, with the result that thirty-eight letters which appeared first in the *Evening Post* are included in this volume.

Bryant's concern with and involvement in political affairs, though most evident in his editorials and personal consultations as well as public meetings, is reflected to a growing extent in letters to public men, such as George Bancroft, John Dix, Lyman Draper, Azariah Flagg, Charles Hubbell, James Kirke Paulding, President Polk, Senator Benjamin Tappan, Samuel Tilden, Albert Tracy, and Gideon Welles, and in one addressed to the "Democratic-Republican Electors of New York." A score of letters to editors and publishers have to do with his contributions to magazines and the occasional publication of collections of his verses. A few evidence his continuing commitment to the various arts: his copyright petition to Congress, and his letters to Cooper, Forrest, Greenough, Longfellow, Rand, Rosini, and Bayard Taylor. Others reveal his strenuous efforts to help his friends: Julia Sands to an inheritance, William Leggett to a diplomatic mission, James Ombrosi to a consular appointment, Elizabeth Oakes Smith to the publication of a play, or—with outstanding success—Richard Dana to find a publisher for his son's tale of the sea, *Two Years Before the Mast*.

Bryant made several firm friends during this period, though they appear only casually as yet in his correspondence; chief among them were Orville Dewey, John Gourlie, Leonice Moulton, Caroline Kirkland, William Gilmore Simms, Samuel Tilden, and Robert Waterston. And he corresponded rather infrequently, in some cases not at all, with older friends, most of whom he saw often in New York or on his travels—George Bancroft, Thomas Cole, Fenimore Cooper, Asher Durand, Ferdinand Field, Edwin Forrest, Horatio Greenough, Henry Inman, William Leggett, Samuel F. B. Morse, Eliza Robbins, Julia Sands, Catharine, Charles, and Robert Sedgwick, William Ware, and Robert Weir. His acquaintance was considerably widened during his visits to Great Britain in 1845, where, among the many public men he met and by whom he was cordially received, there were several—Edwin Field, Samuel Rogers, and Richard Cobden—with whom he formed lasting friendships.