Flowers in American Poetry.

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Afer making a study of the principal American poets, Bryant, Longfellow, Holmes, Whittier, Lowell, and Poe, I have decided they are susceptable to the beauty of the flowers which they see around them, as well as to sounds that they hear. Altogether they mention flowers about four hundred times. They admire all varieties of flowers, but roses and lilies seem to be favorites with most of them.

Perhaps one reason for all these poets being nature poets is their early surroundings. By a study of their lives we find they were raised in the country or in a small village where they had access to woodland and prairie where flowers are usually very abundant.

William Cullen Bryant was distinctively a student and interpreter of nature. All her aspects and voices were familiar to him, and he reproduced these to us through his poems. In many respects his poems resemble Wordsworths, whom he admired greatly, but we may say the spirit is less intro-spective than the great English poet of mature.

Bryant speaks of roses eleven times in his poems. He calls June the month of roses, and sees distinctively the red rose turning in the morning to meet the kiss of the early breezes. Spring has not really come for the poets until the roses come. To him this flower is the loveliest of all lovely things, and, although it passed away soon, it is prized by him far beyond any sculptural flower. The poet draws a picture with man and roses, comparing the sinful man to a rugged brier rose blooming in the desert amid unpleasant surrounding, and the righteous man to the pure white rose, where the bush is thick with bloom even to the top. He may draw a lesson from his picture of the good shepherd, wearing red and white roses round his temples, always guiding his flocks where the roses dwell, deathless, but always gathered once more. He not only admires the rose

on the bush, but thinks they should be picked and used, for if left they only fade among the foliage and the perfume is lost on the air.

Bryant says even the tears of the mourners and sorrowful, are dried when they walk down a path among the roses, that no one can be aught but happy amid such surroundings. He sees a maiden with roses twined in her hair, thus enhancing her beauty. Along in November he sees what he calls an autumn rose, he admires the rose in both bud and bloom, and remembers a large oak tree near his early childhood home, around which the roses grew abundantly.

Bryant also loved the violet, mentioning it sixteen times in his verse. He refers to the yellow violet, suggesting an unusual color for such a flower.

He says he loves the violet because it is the first flower of spring. While writing in the fall he speaks tenderly of the violet which perished long before. Bryant seems to have lost his love for the violet; for awhile at least, and speaks of other flowers in the woods that would put to shame the violets. He says he has seen it blooming beside the cold snow bank.

Again the blue violets crowd around his door in the morning seemingly for his earliest look. He speaks of the violet that comes and goes before spring is dressed in purple from the columbines. The poet speaks of care and sorrow rolling away at the sight of violets, and a place wet with friendship's tears is always bright, for

"Violets heavenly blue,

Spring glittering from the ground like dew."

He gives the story of a child playing by the river, caressing the flowers, and who is refreshed by the currents of fra-

grance from the violet. When death visited the home and took away their child they placed sweet violets in his hands, and scattered them upon his snowy shroud. According to Bryant it should be a great comfort to those who have loved ones in unknown graves, to think that in May, they are covered with beautiful violets. A request of his was, that when he was sick his friends should place the flowers he loved best, moss-rose and violets near him, that he might gaze upon them until he fell asleep. He tells of a maiden living by the brook always having her home decked with violets.

He only mentions the lily three times. He tells of a girl boating in the lake gathering water lilies. Another maiden, having a brow and cheek as fair as the lily seen in the water, who gathered lilies to twine in her hair.

Pansies are spoken of three times. As we, with loving hands, lay flowers on the graves of our departed friends, so with the mind's eye Bryant saw children laying the pansy, sweet emblems of thought on the last resting place of their dear playmates. The poet makes us see the pansy filling its modest place and blooming to beautify the parks and other places of recreation in the large cities. Again we notice that the softly breathing west wind of November, which has taken leaf by leaf from the branches and scattered them upon the mother earth, has only tenderly petted and caressed the drooping little pansy, and with gentle hand raised its modest face to the sun, so that it might gaze through the golden haze to the autumn skies.

Only once does Bryant call our attention to the prim-rose and when we turn about to view this lovely flower we see that it has been planted by mother's hands upon the grave of the little infant, and has been refreshed and watered with her tears. In the poet's beautiful description of the "Death Of The Flowers," with

him we mourn the untimely taking off of the wind-flower, brier-rose and the orchis, which in their short lives were an inspiration to those around them. Then again in the story of "Setla," we learn that the orchis loves the running stream and is never happier than when growing on its banks. Only twice does he mention the golden-rods, so vived is his description in the picture that we almost see them blooming on the hillside and waving in the breeze. The autumn days bring with them the sunflowers, which bloom in all their beauty on a thousands hills.

If we wish to see blooming phlox, let us wander with that maiden to a western clime where years before with no one to love him, a life dear to her, went out and no one was near to drop a tear on the spot which marked his last resting place. The crimson phlox, through pity for the maid, sprang up to weave in the gentle breezes a word of love to the one that underneath it lay.

Bryant saw on the mountain side the blooming anenomes and the spring beauty which reminded him of the soft red glow on many a youthful cheek. When the violets have drooped and died and the columbine is nodding over the ground bird's nest, when the birds have flown from the leafless trees and the old year is dying, 'tis then with sweet and quiet eye the gentian looks through its fringes to the sky. He gives us a picture of an arch made over the brook by the weaving to-gether of the tree branches, and around thus is twined the purple columbine. Once in the poem "Paradise of Tears," the poet speaks of the sweet for-get-me-nots, coming from the ground bright with friendship's tears. A strange lady having her home on the wild, has her tent shadowed by the tulip tree. When the June breezes blow, the tulip tree which stands by the fountain opens her chalices to humming birds and insects of the sky. A small child playing by the orange tree was cheered and strengthened by the

fragrance. But a time come when his friends were called upon to gather these orange blossoms to place them with hyacinth upon his grave.

Of all the flowers of the woods, the queen in the poets eyes, is the daffodil, which comes so early to spot with sunshine the green floor of the woodlands. Bryant says on an old ruins in Rome, covered with vines may be seen in May the beautiful red poppy, and what could be more picturesque than this standing by a river where the billows come and go.

He says that in November we have so few flowers to deck the grassy meadow, that we appreciate all the more the late dandelions and periwinkles blue, and as we walk through the woods and see leaves dropping, our minds goes back to our brothers who fell on a battle field, and tears come to our eyes, yet we are comforted to think that o'er their graves waves the great purple aster. He gives the iris a place, for he says of all the flowers that love the running stream, the iris is especially worthy of mention.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow is another poet who is a great lover of nature, though he sees only the beauty. The pure white lily appears to be Longfellows favorite flower, since he mentions it seventeen times in his poems. He speaks of a beautiful maiden, and says"like a lily on a river floating she floats upon the river of her lovers thought, then he questions who this floating lily is. The poet thinks every one should have a name and character as spotless as the lily. In "Hiawatha," he speaks of the girl who grew up among the lilies with beauty as the starlight. She was warned not to go among the lilies in the meadow, but among these flowers did she find her lover. At death, however, they could not put the pure lilies on her tomb because of her unworthiness. The poet says that when the lily perishes on earth it blooms again in heaven, he

refers to the rainbow, imagining he sees the lily there. Again he speaks of Hiawatha sailing among the water lilies. Three times does Longfellow allude to the lilies of France that illume heaven and earth.

In the poem to the brook we are told that the lilies and marguerite love to sit by its side and listen to the music of its rolling waters. In the reading of his poems we see roses twelve times. At the beginning of May earth, decked with roses, stands in holiday dress in the fields and by the brooks. In speaking of a maiden, who perhaps was his own daughter, he calls her the rose of love, as pure as the petal of a rose which bloomed for him by the wayside. Again he speaks of a maiden as blooming as a rose. In one place Longfellow speaks as though a mystery was connected with the rose and asked a lady to tell him the meaning. Her reply was: "Its mystery is love, its meaning is youth." He pictures a soldier on duty as guard, wearing red roses in his cap, and bearing a rose at the end of his sword. Longfellow says that the rose with its leaves declares "Christ's Triumph," and all the splendor of the world. The graves of our heroes, who fell in the war, he says are covered with wild roses, and over all alike the sun sends its rays to mingle with the roses and lilies blooming there.

In the far off enchanted land the poet can see roses all in bloom on the dim-discovered coast. What can be more delightful than standing on some high portal where the roses rise to touch our hands in play, to sit and watch the sea and the hustle and bustle of a busy town? He calls June the month of roses and marriages.

In "The Childrens' Crusade," Longfellow speaks of the pure white rose, tossed by the summer wind, loosened on its branch and its petals fall off and cover the groung beneath as though the snow had fallen. He calls the rose of Rome the queen of flowers, its petal

rent and mossy sheath torn away, but still sold to ornament our houses and churches or trodden under man's feet, yet what remains opens its bosom to the sun and even the stars at night hang over it like a swarm of bees. Some one replies to this and asks for the use of the rose and seems to think it only an imaginary flower, but the poet says it is the rose of Paradise, and its hundred thousand petals are saints, and that he spoke not of its uses but of its beauty.

We all agree with the poet when he says it is sweet to wander in the woods at the dawn of spring and gather the first flower, the violet. 'Tis pleasant to wander along the brook and river where these flowers grow in bunches. When the zephyrs diminish the cold the laughing boys and girls may be seen wandering in the field gathering violets. Nobody ever saved the seed, yet they are always plentiful. At a party in the evening the older men and women laughing in friendly contention over their games did not see the lovers seated in the window's embeasure, beholding the moon rise and seeing the stars, which the poet compares to blue for-get-me-nots. Later in the poem the poet says this couple were aboating among the water lilies and golden lotus, and the air was laden with the odorous breath of magnolia blossom. The poet speaks of the compass flower planted by God, to direct the traveler in his journey, although often mislead by the fragrance of other flowers, this humble plant can guide and at last crown us with asphoden flowers. Our attention is called to fields on fire with poppies but at last amid the tangled tufts and weeds, the seed from the poppy drops in silence and gloom, only to reappear the next year to make the fields more beautiful than before.

He thought the beautiful hyacinth out of place when it appeared among the loose disheveled hair of the maiden. Only once does he mention asters, and speaks of them as beautifying our garden

walk. In "Tales of a Wayside Inn," he tells of celebrating the Governor's birthday when the golden buttercups and lilacs, tossing in the wind seemed to welcome the holiday. Twice does the poet refer to"these lovely days of June when the lilacs were in bloom." Once he speaks of the marguerite growing by the brook where the night-in-gale meditates his love and music sweet. Lnogfellow speaks of horses being saddled with wooden saddles painted in brilliant colors, like hollyhocks heavy with blossoms. He speaks several times of vines - seeing them over windows and growing over brooks.

Another of America's best poets was Oliver Wendall Holmes. While not as great a student of nature as Bryant he certainly admired the roses and lilies, mentioning the former fifty-four times and the latter twenty-two. He sees roses in a snow bank and upon a bride; upon soldiers in the French War; among the ocean waves and growing by a spring.

He speaks of the rose as being old and thorny and cold. A flower was given to a girl by her lover, she promising to wear it on her bridal day, but for many a summer the rose had bloomed, and many a winter had swept their bloom away and still the maiden was herself alone and wasted like the flower. He sees the primrose opening at night and roses growing aroung old ruins. He makes a comparison between June's half-opened rose and the rugged desert rose.

The rose, the shamrock and the thistle, according to Holmess' description are as closely intertwined as the ocean currents braid, the Thames, the Clyde and Shannon. The rose is among his favorite flowers for he never tires of telling us how it grows on the field of battle to cheer the fallen hero, how the stalk on which it grows is never too thorny for the little rose to unfold its petals to the sun, and in connection with his poems written of his school days at Harvard, he pays a touching tribute to the rose that clambered

o'er its walls. To him the rose is fairest when 'tis budding new.

As has been said before, he mentions lilies twenty-two times in his poems, and next to the rose this flower seems to be a great favorite with him. The water-lily folds her satin leaves and is hushed to sleep by the murmuring sea, while her sister lily on the shore keeps watch over her that nothing comes to mar her peaceful rest. Golden lilies star the watch towers of Quebec, storms strip them till their cheeks glow with the flush of summer, fresh-blown lilies smile sweetly in the valley, and with Holmes we "live o'er in dreams the Poet Shakespeare's faded life, and come with fresh lilies to wreathe his bust."

Eleven times does he mention the little violet. In the spring-tide it creeps above the ground and gazes into the arch of blue till its own iris wears the deepened hue. What is more beautiful in connection with this flower than the little poem "Under The Violets," where he says, "Say only this: A tender bud that tried to blossom in the snow, lies withered where the violetsbblow." In striking contrast to the modest violet we have the tulip mentioned half a dozen times as a prond flower, whose little cups stays open for scarce an hour.

The poppy, crocus, pansy and dahlis each have their place t to fill in the flower world, and without them it would be incomplete. With Holmes we admire the daisy, wet with morning dew, and like Burns love to roam about the daisy fields. In the poet's garden grew the snow-drop, aster, sunflower, and peony. He speaks of the lilacs, dandelions and margarites as the friends of James Russell Lowell.

Lowell, the American poet, critic, and essayist was another sympathetic student of nature. He was not so fond of flowers as Holmes, yet we find he uses in his poems the universally loved flower the rose.

He wrote a ballad to the rose. In a mere wild rose bud he reads a tale of days gone by, sees sights and sounds dear to him, that are the very moons of memory. As we read this little song to the lily we seem to see it first as a bud which hour by hour and day by day, waited on by wind and sun, watered by rain and dew, at last opens- a perfect flower which could scarcely be more fair. The violet with eyes full of tears, brought to him thoughts of other years, of one he loved. And we agree with him that the rugged wintry days could scarce be borne did we not remember that spring would come and with it the violets would return. With the poet as with us the dandelion is a common flower which is eagerly sought out by the children in May. With the dandelions Lowell does not forget the little yellow butter-cup, which here and there dots the grassy lawn.

John Greenleaf Whittier, the Quaker poet, was a truly original and American poet. He sings for humanity and not for himself. We heed his voice as if it bore a special call to us. He sees the blue-eyed violet modestly blooming in the dell, the myrtle with its snowy bloom, crossing the night'shade's solemn gloom, the passion-flower, towering its tendrils here and there, school girls carrying boquets of aster-flowers, the snow-white lilac and on Hampton Beach, bending above his head, the spray of the flowering locust. Roses b bloom for Whittier in the lanes, by the river bank, and on the graves of departed friends. He saw angel-troops of lilacs, swaying o on their viewless stems, with folded wings of white. The poet says at noon-tide by the lake-side if we stand we may view its surface, made white by the lotus flower.

Our list of American poets would not be complete should we not include in it the name of Edgar Allen Poe, the most brilliant early American poet. We find but few flowers mentioned in his poems. His imagination was exceptionally powerful, and it is in this di-

rection that his poems trend rather than to the realities in nature.

He speaks of the violet twice, once in connection with the poem, "To Helen," how he saw this maiden clad in white, half reclining upon a bank of violets, and again of a bower of violets. He sees lilacs weeping over nameless graves, hyacinths blooming on lovely isles, and those hours of sickness when his life seemed to hang in the balance, he was inspired by the presence of the roses, myrtle and the knowing little pansy.

Time will not permit us to enumerate the minor American poets, although some of their writings have been helpful and inspiring to us in many ways. We find the old saying, "Life without literature is dead," to be too true after we have once been permitted to drink in the many noble thoughts of our able writers. A study of the writings of these men along this particular line of "Flowers in Poetry," has caused us to become more observing and the many little flowers that in time gone by we have trodden under foot will hereafter be looked upon with a kind of reverence by reasons of thoughts which they will bring when we greet them by the wayside or chance to spy them in their secluded work.

"In all places, then and in all seasons,
Flowers expand their light and soul-like
wings,
Teaching us by most persuasive reasons,
How akin they are to human things;
And with child-like, credulous affection,
We behold their tender buds expand,
Emblems of our own great resurrection,
Emblems of the bright and better land."