



Accepted Vase, designed by Messrs. Tiffany & Co.

THE BRYANT TESTIMONIAL VASE.



THE proposition to present a testimonial to Mr. WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT, which originated last autumn, on his eightieth birthday, among the members of the Century Club in New York, has assumed a definite form, and will be carried out in a creditable manner. The committee appointed to execute the wishes of the originators of the project decided that the testimonial should be in the form of a vase, to be executed as a work of art, and ornamented in an

appropriate manner with designs illustrating the most important events in the life of the poet. The committee consisted of the Rev. Drs. Samuel Osgood, Henry W. Bellows, and Potter, and Messrs. William H. Appleton, John Taylor Johnston, Benjamin H. Field, Theodore Roosevelt, Joseph H. Choate, and others; and, on their invitation, designs were submitted for approval by the leading art-workers in silver in New York. The design accepted was presented by the house of Tiffany & Co., and was the work of their head artist, Mr. James H. Whitehouse. This design

we have engraved in connection with the others presented to the committee, and we believe that all will be accepted by the readers of the ART JOURNAL as creditable to the genius of our American artists in design.

The accepted design is to be executed in oxidised silver, and thirty inches in height. The style of the subject inclines to the Greek form, and is not particularly novel; but it is the outside ornamentation which is its *tour de force*, and is entirely original with the artist. The artist, in his remarks before the committee, in explanation of his motive, said: "When the Bryant testimonial was first mentioned to me, my thoughts at once flew to the country—to the crossing of the boughs of trees, to the plants and flowers, and to a general contemplation of Nature, and these, together with a certain Homeric influence, produced in my mind the germ of the design—the form of a Greek vase, with the most beautiful of American flowers and plants growing around and entwining themselves gracefully about it, each breathing its own particular story as it grew." In the design, the artist appears to have, in the first place, moulded a vase, pure and simple in form, and upon this basis built up a device of studies which entirely covers its surface, and in effect illustrates the career of the poet from his early years to his ripened maturity. In this style of decoration there is a gracefulness, as it were, given to the object which will be appreciated by all lovers of Art.

The vase is entirely covered with gracefully-drawn lines of fretwork, formed of the apple-branch and its delicate blossom, which are great favourites with Mr. Bryant, and is intended to suggest that his writings are not only beautiful in verse, but that they all bear a fruitful moral, as the apple-tree shows a blossom in the



spring, and in autumn produces fruit. Of this fret-work, in order to preserve an unbroken outline, no part of the ornamentation has been allowed to project. Running under this, and forming the finer lines of the fret, are the eglantine and the amaranth, the first of which suggests the spirit of true poetry, and the latter immortality. The most prominent object on the side of the vase is a portrait-bust of the poet wearing the laurel, and running around the piece are medallions in low relief, giving various scenes in his life and works. In the first group his father appears, and points to Homer as a model in poetic verse:—

"For he is in his grave who taught my youth
The art of verse, and in the bud of life
Offered me to the muses."

The supporting medallion shows the poet in the words—

"Stranger, if thou hast learned a truth which needs
No school of long experience, that the world
Is full of guilt and misery, and hast seen
Enough of all its sorrows, crimes, and cares,
To tire thee of it, enter this wild wood,
And view the haunts of Nature."

The thirds marks his life as an editor, and the fourth commemorates his labour in the maturity of his years as a translator of the "Iliad" and "Odyssey." Above the head of the poet are the lyre and other unique ornaments, among which is the most primitive form of printing-press.

Holding a prominent position under these objects is the "water-fowl," which illustrates the poet's well-known poem.

The lower part of the bowl is ornamented with the staple American agricultural productions—cotton and maize, or Indian-corn. The neck is en-



Design submitted by the Gorham Company, with Plan showing Groups upon the Pedestal.

twined with the primrose and ivy, illustrating youth and old age; and the "fringed gentian," suggesting the lines—

"I would that thus when I shall see
The hand of death draw near to me,
Hope, blossoming within my heart,
May look to heaven as I depart."

The famous line commencing—

"Truth, crushed to earth,"

is also given here in the form of an ornamental border. The ornament at the foot of the vase is the water-lily, a symbol of eloquence, in illustration of Mr. Bryant's oratorical powers. The handles are graceful in outline, and are ornamented with the Indian-corn and cotton; while the bobolink, the poet's "Robert of Lincoln," is perched over all in representation of humorous verse. The base bears the lyre, the crossed pens, and the broken shackles, emblems which sum up the life and work of the poet.

Among the propositions submitted to the Committee on the Bryant Memorial Vase, was a design by one of the artists of the Gorham Silver Company, of Providence, Mr. T. J. Pairpoint.

Mr. Pairpoint's conception of the memorial is poetical; a twin monument, with the more imperishable works of the poet's own art, to his genius rather than to his person and fame merely. The memorial vase, as designed, would have stood four feet high, its pedestal surrounded by subsidiary figures, being thirty-eight inches in circumference and one foot in height. As the value of the proposed memorial would have been considerably in excess of the sum proposed by the committee, it was the purpose of the Gorham Company to solicit the acceptance of this over-value, as their contribution to the fund.

The form of the vase, as may be seen by the engraving, is of a purely Grecian character, gracefully elongated to monumental proportions, elevated on a monumental pedestal, and still further heightened by a winged figure of Fame. The surface is richly ornamented with a variety of emblematic borders and designs, the central figure of which is a medalion-bust of the poet as he now appears. Around the cylindrical pedestal, and resting on the base, are disposed six bold groups in *alto-rilievo*, each an expression of the leading conception in one of Mr. Bryant's great poetical works.

The subjects selected are 'Thanatopsis,' 'The Death of Slavery,' 'Waiting by the Gate,' 'The Conqueror's Grave,' 'A Day Dream,' and the 'Odyssey of Homer' (translated). The figures in each of the groups are ten inches high. 'Thanatopsis' is represented by the figure of the poet, with a winged hour-glass at his feet, gazing with his mind's eye on the long train of ages, in fig-



Design submitted by the Whiting Company.

ures from youth to decrepitude, and in costumes from classic and mediæval to modern times.

'The Death of Slavery' is typified by the three emancipated figures of the family; the man tossing his arms with broken shackles towards heaven and shouting; the woman holding up her free babe as she kneels to thank God for its new destiny.

'Waiting by the Gate' shows four young children floating in clouds out of the gate towards heaven, indicated by rays of glory and circles of stars in the background; leaving Death, symbolised by the scythe, behind them.

'The Conqueror's Grave' is illustrated by the ascent of the soul, in a female figure, and radiant with celestial joy, rising to heaven amidst a shower of flowers thrown to her from welcoming hands. On the ground beneath her feet is a figure of Death, disarmed, chained down, and writhing in rage that he is powerless to do her harm.

'A Day Dream' represents the poet seated on a rock overlooking the sea, with the waves dashing up nearly to his feet; and female forms appear rising from the sea, clad in thin drapery, with long, flowing tresses, sporting in and on the waves, and extending their arms to him.

'The Odyssey' is represented by the figure of Ulysses sailing away from Calypso's enchanted island, with his hand on the helm of his ship, and gazing for guidance on the Pleiades.

Beneath these groups, on the sides, are shields for inscription, and, between the shields, wreaths of Grecian immortelles, tied with a ribbon.

The vase is bordered at its foot with laurel-leaves. The lower part is covered with a Greek ornament, introducing wheat, emblematical of the 'Song of the Sower.' On the obverse side of the vase is introduced 'The Yellow Violet,' entwined with Greek ornament.

The main or upper part of the vase, from which the handles spring, has a slightly-sunk panel, in which is the portrait of Mr. Bryant, in low relief; so that the purity of outline is not broken. Around the portrait are branches

of laurel entwined with a ribbon, on which are engraved titles referring to the various departments of life and letters in which the subject has been distinguished. On the reverse is a panel occupied by an ideal figure representing Journalism, and surrounded by boughs of oak, signifying power.

The handles contain four illustrations of poems on birds. The first is 'The Water-Fowl,' typical of persevering aspiration. The second is 'Robert of Lincoln,' with his soberly-clad mate. On the reverse of one of the handles is represented 'The Coming of the Birds.' The other handle shows on the reverse 'The Last Bird'

(a translation from the Spanish). Around the top of the vase is a fluted border, and dividing the neck is a deep leaf-border; and the edge of the cover has a Greek border representing running water, significant of the purity of Mr. Bryant's life and works. The whole is surmounted by the winged figure of Fame, holding in one hand a branch of palm, and in the other a wreath of victory.

The design for the Bryant Vase, submitted by the Whiting Manufacturing Company, of New York, was drawn by their head artist and designer, Mr. Charles Osborne. The outline form of the vase is classical, and rests upon a marble base, and in its general character conforms to the monumental order of art. The marble base was designed to have on its sides four panels in silver *repoussé*, with illustrations in high relief. The front bears a spirited illustration from 'Thanatopsis.' The reverse was designed to have a scene drawn from 'The Conqueror's Grave;' and the two supporting panels to represent the Homeric period and our own time. In one Homer was to appear reciting his poems, and the other was intended to show the modern poet surrounded by objects representing the telegraph, printing-press, and other appliances of science. The general plan of the ornamentation was to represent Mr. Bryant as the poet and journalist, and to leave out every object or incident which might be construed to have political significance. The panels were to be bordered with a rich design of silver moulding.

At the foot of the vase is introduced a wreath of immortelles wound with a ribbon, which was to bear the names of Mr. Bryant's principal poems, and above that are various forms of Grecian ornamentation. Surrounding the lower part of the body is a series of sunken panels, each of which contains specimens of field and wild flowers, such as the mullein, hollyhock, sunflower, ferns, and other varieties, wrought in high relief; and above is a row of medallions, representing the different animals, birds of the woods and streams; the squirrel, rabbit, partridge, raccoon, beaver, and other species, all of which are spoken of by the poet in his writings. In the centre of the vase is a medallion surrounded by a laurel-wreath bearing a portrait of Mr. Bryant in high relief, and beneath is a monogram with the date 1874. On the reverse side



Design submitted by Messrs. Starr & Marcus.

drawn, and forms a beautiful object in connection with the design which it surmounts. The height of the vase as proposed was thirty-eight inches, and it was to be wrought of oxidised silver, and relieved at points by gilding.

The design of the vase proposed by Starr & Marcus is strictly classical. From a solid base rises a graceful urn, as a symbol of the artistic work of the poet's life, and crowned with his seated figure. The base is octagonal, and is flanked at each corner by a pedestal supporting four emblematic figures—Truth, Meditation, Inspiration, and America: Truth, the dominant quality of the poet's pure and lofty moral nature; Meditation, the communing of his

there is a corresponding medallion, intended for an inscription. On either side of the portrait-medallion are illustrations of 'The Song of the Sower' and of 'Sella;' and above this is an illustration of 'The Little People of the Snow,' and four other subjects in high relief were proposed to surround the base of the neck. On the neck, the front panel bears an illustration of 'Robert of Lincoln,' and the opposite niche was to be filled with a design drawn from 'Lines to a Waterfowl.' The body of the vase is ornamented with handles, which, in form and general character, conform to its graceful outlines. The ornamentation of the handles is typical of the nationality of the poet. At the place of beginning, where they spring from the body of the vase, are the cotton-plant and sugar-cane, and at the graceful curves above are the stalks of the Indian-corn, with the ears partly opened, as if ripe for the sickle, and the whole terminates with a fan-like ornament. The neck appears bent in, or pinched, at the sides, and the top shows a series of curves, which adds to its graceful beauty, but is a departure, in a measure, from the pure Grecian form of the body. This design was apparently adopted by the artist to give greater value to the crowning figure in illustration of the line—

“Truth crushed to earth shall rise again.”

Error is shown in the distorted figure lying prostrate with her mask stripped off, and showing her deformity; while Truth is typified by a soaring figure rising from Error and supported by the drapery which floats below her feet. This figure is gracefully

spirit with God and Nature, through which, while he muses, the fire burns within; Inspiration, the creative fluent force shaping forth his brooding fancies into beauteous realities; America, the source of all that is strongest, and the atmosphere of all that is most vital in his works, and symbolised, therefore, in the likeness of Minerva as the tutelary guide of his genius. These four figures are seated in niches, the arches of which rest upon classic panels; and in these panels are medallions representing eight celebrated poets of the world.

On either side of the arches, the corner panels of the surbase are intended to contain, in bold but delicately-wrought *rilievo*, subjects taken from Mr. Bryant's minor poems. Rising to the body of the vase may be observed four classic panels, dividing four scenes, executed in the most artistic *rilievo*, and representing four of the poet's noblest lyric poems: 'The Indian at the Burial-place of his Fathers,' 'The Indian Girl's Lament,' 'Rizpah watching her Dead on Gibeah's Rocks,' and 'The Death of Slavery.' Each panel which intervenes between these scenes was designed to bear one of the following striking lines:—

- "The fair disburdened lands
welcome a nobler race."
"The light of hope, the leading
star of love."
"The everlasting creed of
Liberty."
"Truth crushed to earth shall
rise again."

About the projecting rim of the vase rich arabesques are wrought in the manner of a frieze, representing fruits, flowers, and grains of American growth, the "fringed gentian," the azalea, the silver tassels of the maize, and the like, and the handles, of antique and strictly classical form, are supported by the heads of fauns festooned with drooping garlands of the American hemlock and pine. The whole is surmounted by a drum or a pedestal, around which circle graceful little genii, bearing up the seated form of the venerable master himself, crowned, like Petrarch at the Roman capitol, with a wreath of bays, wrought in enamelled gold. The statuette was intended as an ideal, except so far as would comport with the correct reproduction of Mr. Bryant's impressive head and striking features. On the chief panel of the vase was to be inscribed a verse from his earliest poem of importance, 'The Ages.'

The vase as proposed was to have been thirty-two inches in height, and of weight of from four to five hundred ounces; the



Design submitted by Messrs. Black, Starr & Frost.

whole of sterling silver, oxidised and enriched with gold wherever the process was advisable to produce or heighten a harmonious effect.

The design for the Bryant Testimonial Vase presented by Messrs. Black, Starr & Frost, represents the Grecian form, and rests upon a square base with the statuette figures of 'History,' and 'Mercury' resting upon oval projections on either side. 'History' stands in an attitude of deep thought, with a written scroll in her right hand; and that of 'Mercury' is crowned with the laurel. The front of the vase bears a large medallion portrait of the poet, Mr. Bryant, in low relief, and encircling it is a boldly-wrought laurel-wreath. Upon the oval projections under the great medallions are four panels, which were designed to illustrate some of the poet's most popular poems, and the base is also enriched with mouldings. The lower part or standard of the vase is fluted, and the projections are richly encrusted with leafy and floral ornaments in low relief. From this part two handles spring and follow gracefully-curved lines, and again join the body below the neck, where from an enfoliated design resting upon the shoulder there depends a mass of familiar flowers.

The body of the vase has an elaborate illustration, extending around its entire circumference, drawn from Homer's 'Odyssey,' in low relief; and on its front is a statuette figure, in full relief, of 'Apollo' seated and holding his lyre. This figure is admirably drawn, and rests upon a buttress which springs from the

body of the vase. The reverse side was to have been ornamented with a corresponding figure. The neck of the vase is fluted at its lower part, and has two projecting circles or friezes, the lower part of which is richly ornamented with floral designs. Surmounting the whole is the fabled figure of 'Pegasus,' who is winging his flight to the heavens.

The design of the vase is of the monumental order, but in its execution it has been treated in an heroic way which is very imposing. The object of the artist appears to have been the production of a classical monument in honour of Mr. Bryant's genius, based upon his fame as a scholar, poet, and journalist in general, rather than upon incidents drawn from his writings. The vase was to be executed in oxidised silver, enriched with gold, at the option of the committee.