

1875

CHRISTMAS IN 1875

William Cullen Bryant

Bryant, William Cullen (1794-1878) - American poet and editor of the New York Evening Post who practiced law before devoting his life to writing. A master of blank verse, Bryant's earliest works are considered his best. Christmas in 1875 (1875) - Opening lines: No trumpet-blast profaned / The hour in which the Prince of Peace was born;...

CHRISTMAS IN 1875

No trumpet-blast profaned
The hour in which the Prince of Peace was born;
No bloody streamlet stained
Earth's silver rivers on that sacred morn;
But, o'er the peaceful plain,
The war-horse drew the peasant's loaded wain.

The soldier had laid by
The sword and stripped the corselet from his breast,
And hung his helm on high
The sparrow's winter home and summer nest;
And, with the same strong hand
That flung the barbed spear, he tilled the land.

Oh, time for which we yearn;
Oh, sabbath of the nations long foretold!
Season of peace, return,
Like a late summer when the year grows old,
When the sweet sunny days

Steeped mead and mountain-side in golden haze.

For now two rival kings
Flaunt, o'er our bleeding land, their hostile flags,
And every sunrise brings
The hovering vulture from his mountain-crag
To where the battle-plain
Is strewn with dead, the youth and flower of Spain.

Christ is not come, while yet
O'er half the earth the threat of battle lowers,
And our own fields are wet,
Beneath the battle-cloud, with crimson showers-
The life-blood of the slain,
Poured out where thousands die that one may reign.

Soon, over half the earth,
In every temple crowds shall kneel again
To celebrate His birth
Who brought the message of good-will to men,
And bursts of joyous song
Shall shake the roof above the prostrate throng.

Christ is not come, while there
The men of blood whose crimes affront the skies
Kneel down in act of prayer,
Amid the joyous strains, and when they rise
Go forth, with sword and flame,
To waste the land in His most holy name.

Oh, when the day shall break
O'er realms unlearned in warfare's cruel arts,
And all their millions wake
To peaceful tasks performed with loving hearts,
On such a blessed morn,
Well may the nations say that Christ is born.

THE END