

1832

HYMN TO THE NORTH STAR

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. Hymn to the North Star (1832) - Opening lines: The sad and solemn night / Hath yet her multitude of cheerful fires;...

HYMN TO THE NORTH STAR

The sad and solemn night
 Hath yet her multitude of cheerful fires;
 The glorious host of light
 Walk the dark hemisphere till she retires;
 All through her silent watches, gliding slow,
 Her constellations come, and climb the heavens, and go.

Day, too, hath many a star
 To grace his gorgeous reign, as bright as they:
 Through the blue fields afar,
 Unseen, they follow in his flaming way:
 Many a bight lingerer, as the eve grows dim,
 Tells what a radiant troop arose and set with him.

And thou dost see them rise,
 Star of the Pole! and thou dost see them set.
 Alone, in thy cold skies,
 Thou keep'st thy old unmoving station yet,
 Nor join'st the dances of that glittering train,
 Nor dipp'st thy virgin orb in the blue western main.

There, at morn's rosy birth,
 Thou lookest meekly through the kindling air,
 And eve, that round the earth
 Chases the day, beholds thee watching there;
 There noontide finds thee, and the hour that calls
 The shapes of polar flame to scale heaven's azure walls.

Alike, beneath thine eye,
 The deeds of darkness and of light are done;
 High toward the starlit sky
 Towns blaze, the smoke of battle blots the sun,
 The night storm on a thousand hills is loud,
 And the strong wind of day doth mingle sea and cloud.

On thy unaltering blaze
 The half-wrecked mariner, his compass lost,
 Fixes his steady gaze,
 And steers, undoubting, to the friendly coast;
 And they who stray in perilous wastes, by night,
 Are glad when thou dost shine to guide their footsteps right.

And, therefore, bards of old,
Sages and hermits of the solemn wood,
Did in thy beams behold
A beauteous type of that unchanging good,
That bright eternal beacon, by whose ray
The voyager of time should shape his heedful way.

THE END