

1832

WILLIAM TELL

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. William Tell (1832) - Opening lines: Chains may subdue the feeble spirit, but thee, / Tell, of the iron heart! they could not tame!...

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Chains may subdue the feeble spirit, but thee, Tell, of the iron heart! they could not tame!

For thou wert of the mountains; they proclaim The everlasting creed of liberty.

That creed is written on the untrampled snow, Thundered by torrents which no power can hold, Save that of God, when He sends forth His cold, And breathed by winds that through the free heaven blow.

Thou, while thy prison-walls were dark around, Didst meditate the lesson Nature taught, And to thy brief captivity was brought A vision of thy Switzerland unbound.

The bitter cup they mingled, strengthened thee For the great work to set thy country free.

THE END