

TEXAS  
A DEMOCRATIC ODE

—

I

THE WILD BEES

**A**LL along the Brazos river,  
All along the Colorado,  
In the valleys and the lowlands  
Where the trees were tall and stately,  
In the rich and rolling meadows  
Where the grass was full of wild-flowers,  
Came a humming and a buzzing,  
Came the murmur of a going  
To and fro among the tree-tops,  
Far and wide across the meadows.  
And the red-men in their tepees  
Smoked their pipes of clay and listened.  
“What is this?” they asked in wonder;  
“Who can give the sound a meaning?  
Who can understand the language  
Of a going in the tree-tops?”  
Then the wisest of the Tejas  
Laid his pipe aside and answered:  
“O my brothers, these are people,  
Very little, winged people,  
Countless, busy, banded people,  
Coming humming through the timber.  
These are tribes of bees, united  
By a single aim and purpose,  
To possess the Tejas’ country,

## The Inaugural Poem

Gather harvest from the prairies,  
Store their wealth among the timber.  
These are hive and honey makers,  
Sent by Manito to warn us  
That the white men now are coming,  
With their women and their children.  
Not the fiery filibusters  
Passing wildly in a moment,  
Like a flame across the prairies,  
Like a whirlwind through the forest,  
Leaving empty lands behind them!  
Not the Mexicans and Spaniards,  
Indolent and proud hidalgos,  
Dwelling in their haciendas,  
Dreaming, talking of to-morrow,  
While their cattle graze around them,  
And their fickle revolutions  
Change the rulers, not the people!  
Other folk are these who follow  
When the wild-bees come to warn us;  
These are hive and honey makers,  
These are busy, banded people,  
Roaming far to swarm and settle,  
Working every day for harvest,  
Fighting hard for peace and order,  
Worshiping as queens their women,  
Making homes and building cities  
Full of riches and of trouble.  
All our hunting-grounds must vanish,  
All our lodges fall before them,  
All our customs and traditions,  
All our happy life of freedom,  
Fade away like smoke before them.

## Texas : A Democratic Ode

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Come, my brothers, strike your tepees,  
Call your women, load your ponies !  
Let us take the trail to westward,  
Where the plains are wide and open,  
Where the bison-herds are gathered  
Waiting for our feathered arrows.  
We will live as lived our fathers,  
Gleaners of the gifts of nature,  
Hunters of the unkept cattle,  
Men whose women run to serve them.  
If the toiling bees pursue us,  
If the white men seek to tame us,  
We will fight them off and flee them,  
Break their hives and take their honey,  
Moving westward, ever westward,  
There to live as lived our fathers.”  
So the red-men drove their ponies,  
With the tent-poles trailing after,  
Out along the path to sunset,  
While along the river valleys  
Swarmed the wild-bees, the forerunners ;  
And the white men, close behind them,  
Men of mark from old Missouri,  
Men of daring from Kentucky,  
Tennessee, Louisiana,  
Men of many States and races,  
Bringing wives and children with them,  
Followed up the wooded valleys,  
Spread across the rolling prairies,  
Raising homes and reaping harvests.  
Rude the toil that tried their patience,  
Fierce the fights that proved their courage,  
Rough the stone and tough the timber

## The Inaugural Poem

Out of which they built their order !  
 Yet they never failed nor faltered,  
 And the instinct of their swarming  
 Made them one and kept them working,  
 Till their toil was crowned with triumph,  
 And the country of the Tejas  
 Was the fertile land of Texas.

## II

### THE LONE STAR

Behold a star appearing in the South—  
 A star that shines apart from other stars,  
     Ruddy and fierce, like Mars !  
 Out of the reeking smoke of cannon's mouth  
 That veils the slaughter of the Alamo,  
     Where heroes face the foe,  
 One man against a score, with blood-choked breath  
 Shouting the watchword, "Victory or Death—"  
 Out of the dreadful cloud that settles low  
     On Goliad's plain,  
 Where thrice a hundred prisoners lie slain  
 Beneath the broken word of Mexico—  
 Out of the fog of factions and of feuds  
     That ever drifts and broods  
 Above the bloody path of border war,  
     Leaps the Lone Star !

What light is this that does not dread the dark?  
 What star is this that fights a stormy way  
     To San Jacinto's field of victory?  
     It is the fiery spark

## Texas: A Democratic Ode

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That burns within the breast  
Of Anglo-Saxon men, who can not rest  
Under a tyrant's sway;  
The upward-leading ray  
That guides the brave who give their lives away  
Rather than not be free!

O question not, but honour every name,  
Travis and Crockett, Bowie, Bonham, Ward,  
Fannin and King, all who drew the sword  
And dared to die for Texan liberty!  
Yea, write them all upon the roll of fame,  
But no less love and equal honour give  
To those who paid the longer sacrifice—  
Austin and Houston, Burnet, Rusk, Lamar  
And all the stalwart men who dared to live  
Long years of service to the lonely star.

Great is the worth of such heroic souls:  
Amid the strenuous turmoil of their deeds,  
They clearly speak of something that controls  
The higher breeds of men by higher needs  
Than bees, content with honey in their hives!  
Ah, not enough the narrow lives  
On profitable toil intent!  
And not enough the guerdons of success  
Garnered in homes of affluent selfishness!  
A noble discontent  
Cries for a wider scope  
To use the wider wings of human hope;  
A vision of the common good  
Opens the prison-door of solitude;  
And, once beyond the wall,  
Breathing the ampler air,

## The Inaugural Poem

The heart becomes aware  
 That life without a country is not life at all.  
 A country worthy of a freeman's love;  
 A country worthy of a good man's prayer;  
 A country strong, and just, and brave, and fair,—  
 A woman's form of beauty throned above  
 The shrine where noble aspirations meet—  
 To live for her is great, to die is sweet!

Heirs of the rugged pioneers  
 Who dreamed this dream and made it true,  
 Remember that they dreamed for you.  
 They did not fear their fate  
 In those tempestuous years,  
 But put their trust in God, and with keen eyes,  
 Trained in the open air for looking far,  
 They saw the many-million-acred land  
 Won from the desert by their hand,  
 Swiftly among the nations rise,—  
 Texas a sovereign State,  
 And on her brow a star!

## III

## THE CONSTELLATION

How strange that the nature of light is a thing beyond our  
 ken,  
 And the flame of the tiniest candle flows from a fountain  
 sealed!  
 How strange that the meaning of life, in the little lives of  
 men,  
 So often baffles our search with a mystery unrevealed!

But the larger life of man, as it moves in its secular sweep,  
Is the working out of a Sovereign Will whose ways  
appear;  
And the course of the journeying stars on the dark blue  
boundless deep,  
Is the place where our science rests in the reign of law  
most clear.

I would read the story of Texas as if it were written on  
high;  
I would look from afar to follow her path through the  
calms and storms;  
With a faith in the world-wide sway of the Reason that rules  
in the sky,  
And gathers and guides the starry host in clusters and  
swarms.

When she rose in the pride of her youth, she seemed to be  
moving apart,  
As a single star in the South, self-limited, self-possessed;  
But the law of the constellation was written deep in her  
heart,  
And she heard when her sisters called, from the North  
and the East and the West.

They were drawn together and moved by a common hope  
and aim—  
The dream of a sign that should rule a third of the  
heavenly arch;  
The soul of a people spoke in their call, and Texas came  
To enter the splendid circle of States in their onward  
march.

## The Inaugural Poem

So the glory gathered and grew and spread from sea to sea,  
And the stars of the great republic lent each other light;  
For all were bound together in strength, and each was free—  
Suddenly broke the tempest out of the ancient night!

It came as a clash of the force that drives and the force that  
draws;  
And the stars were riven asunder, the heavens were  
desolate,  
While brother fought with brother, each for his country's  
cause—  
But the country of one was the Nation, the country of  
other the State.

Oh, who shall measure the praise or blame in a strife so  
vast?  
And who shall speak of traitors or tyrants when all were  
true?  
We lift our eyes to the sky, and rejoice that the storm is past,  
And we thank the God of all that the Union shines in the  
blue.

Yea, it glows with the glory of peace and the hope of a  
mighty race,  
High over the grave of broken chains and buried hates;  
And the great, big star of Texas is shining clear in its place  
In the constellate symbol and sign of the free United  
States.



IV

AFTER THE PIONEERS

After the pioneers—  
Big-hearted, big-handed lords of the axe and the plow and  
the rifle,  
Tan-faced tamers of horses and lands, themselves remaining  
tameless,  
Full of fighting, labour and romance, lovers of rude  
adventure—  
After the pioneers have cleared the way to their homes and  
graves on the prairies:

After the State-builders—  
Zealous and jealous men, dreamers, debaters, often at odds  
with each other,  
All of them sure it is well to toil and to die, if need be,  
Just for the sake of founding a country to leave to their  
children—  
After the builders have done their work and written their  
names upon it:

After the civil war—  
Wildest of all storms, cruel and dark and seemingly  
wasteful,  
Tearing up by the root the vines that were splitting the old  
foundations,  
Washing away with a rain of blood and tears the dust of  
slavery,  
After the cyclone has passed and the sky is fair to the far  
horizon;

## The Inaugural Poem

After the era of plenty and peace has come with full hands  
to Texas,  
Then—what then?

Is it to be the life of an indolent heir, fat-witted and  
self-contented,  
Dwelling at ease in the house that others have builded,  
Boasting about the country for which he has done nothing?  
Is it to be an age of corpulent, deadly-dull prosperity,  
Richer and richer crops to nourish a race of Philistines,  
Bigger and bigger cities full of the same confusion and  
sorrow,  
The people increasing mightily but no increase of the  
joy?  
Is this what the forerunners wished and toiled to win for  
you,  
This the reward of war and the fruitage of high endeavour,  
This the goal of your hopes and the vision that satisfies you?

Nay, stand up and answer—I can read what is in your  
hearts—  
You, the children of those who followed the wild bees,  
You, the children of those who served the Lone Star,  
Now that the hives are full and the star is fixed in the  
constellation,  
I know that the best of you still are lovers of sweetness and  
light!  
You hunger for honey that comes from invisible gardens;  
Pure, translucent, golden thoughts and feelings and  
inspirations,  
Sweetness of all the best that has bloomed in the mind of  
man.

You rejoice in the light that is breaking along the borders of  
science;  
The hidden rays that enable a man to look through a wall of  
stone;  
The unseen, fire-filled wings that carry his words across the  
ocean;  
The splendid gift of flight that shines, half-captured, above  
him;  
The gleam of a thousand half-guessed secrets, just ready to  
be discovered!  
You dream and devise great things for the coming  
race—  
Children of yours who shall people and rule the domain of  
Texas;  
They shall know, they shall comprehend more than their  
fathers,  
They shall grow in the vigour of well-rounded manhood and  
womanhood,  
Riper minds, richer hearts, finer souls, the only true wealth  
of a nation—  
The league-long fields of the State are pledged to ensure this  
harvest!

Your old men have dreamed this dream and your young  
men have seen this vision.  
The age of romance has not gone, it is only beginning;  
Greater words than the ear of man has heard are waiting to  
be spoken,  
Finer arts than the eyes of man have seen are sleeping to be  
awakened—  
Science exploring the scope of the world,  
Poetry breathing the hope of the world,  
Music to measure and lead the onward march of man!

## The Inaugural Poem

Come, ye honoured and welcome guests from the elder  
nations,  
Princes of science and arts and letters,  
Look on the walls that embody the generous dream of one  
of the old men of Texas,  
Enter these halls of learning that rise in the land of the  
pioneer's log-cabin,  
Read the confessions of faith that are carved on the stones  
around you:  
Faith in the worth of the smallest fact and the laws that  
govern the starbeams—  
Faith in the beauty of truth and the truth of perfect beauty,  
Faith in the God who creates the souls of men by knowledge  
and love and worship.  
This is the faith of the New Democracy—  
Proud and humble, patiently pressing forward,  
Praising her heroes of old and training her future leaders,  
Seeking her crown in a nobler race of men and women—  
After the pioneers, sweetness and light!

HENRY VAN DYKE.