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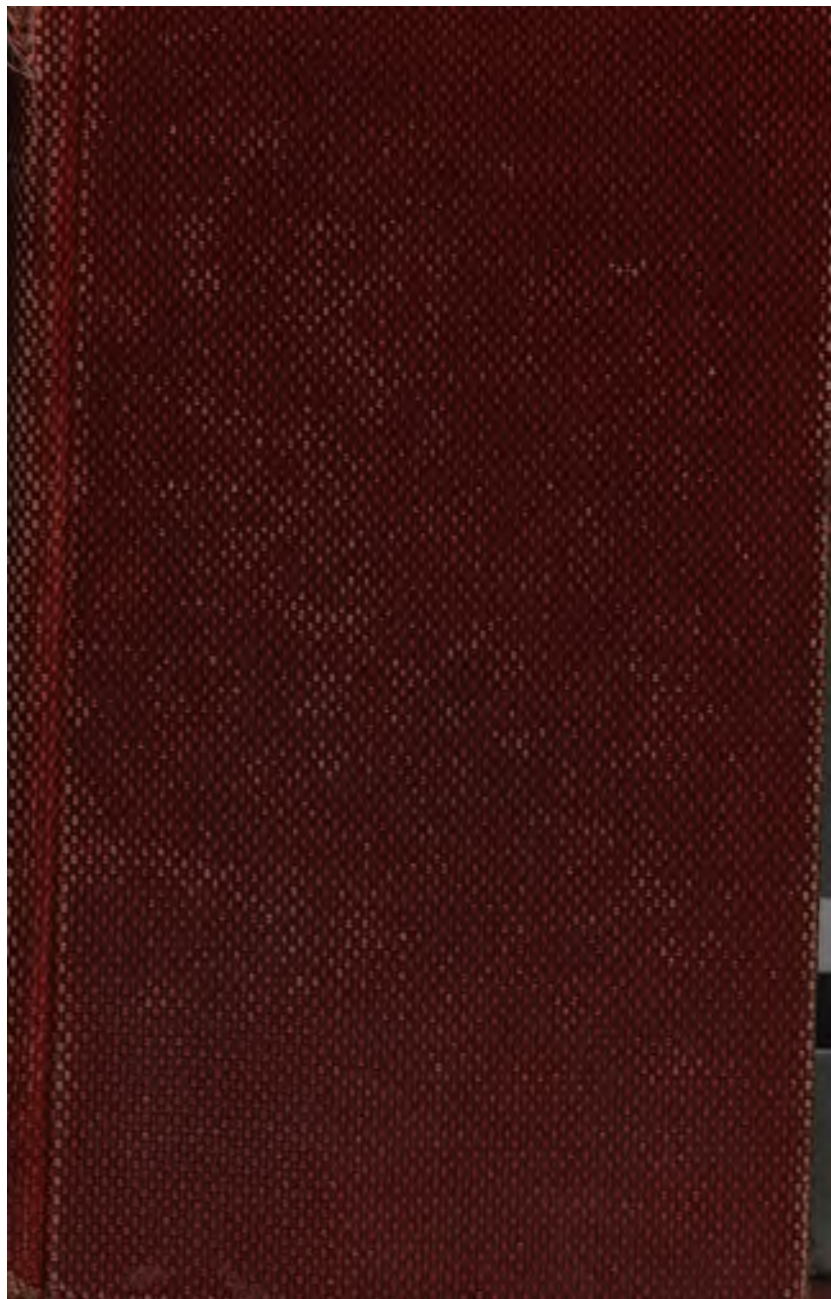
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T. P. 1801

J. B. 1801

William Blake

*Done in chief edition*

**THE ALDINE EDITION  
OF THE BRITISH  
POETS.**



**THE POETICAL WORKS OF  
WILLIAM BLAKE.**



THE POETICAL WORKS OF  
WILLIAM BLAKE,  
LYRICAL AND MISCELLANEOUS.

EDITED, WITH A PREFATORY MEMOIR, BY  
WILLIAM MICHAEL ROSSETTI.

He wanders, like a day-appearing dream,  
Through the dim wildernesses of the mind.  
SHELLEY.



LONDON:  
GEORGE BELL AND SONS, YORK STREET,  
COVENT GARDEN

1890.

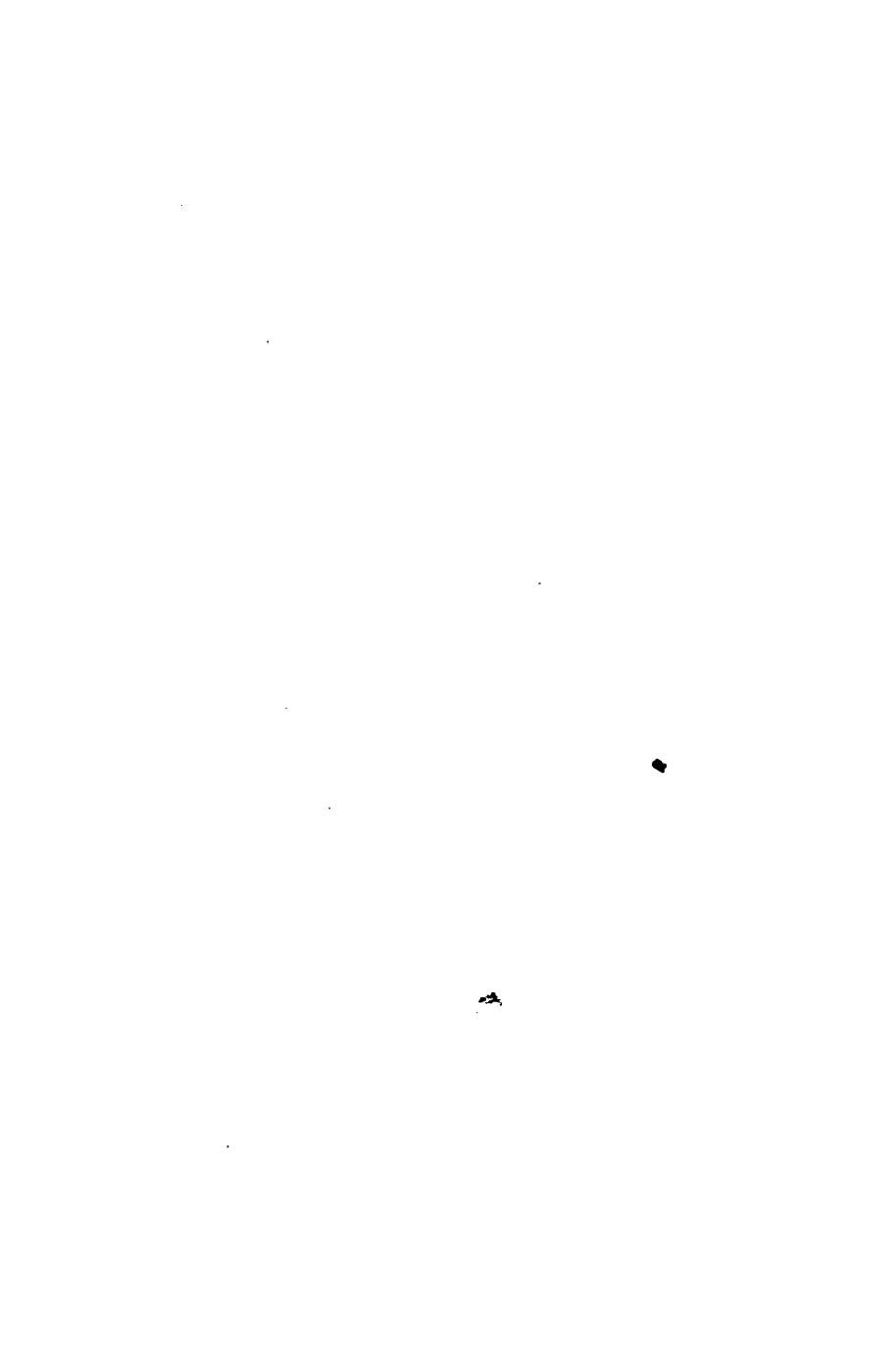


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## PREFATORY MEMOIR.

### I.—PRELIMINARY.

**I**N writing a Memoir of William Blake, little or no difficulty can now arise as to the external facts—the dates, personages, and incidents. The truly valuable and so far exhaustive book of Mr. Alexander Gilchrist has settled all these points for us substantially; it barely requires to be here and there rectified or supplemented in some minor particular. Its tone moreover is as earnest and elevated as its research is true and thorough. I need hardly say that I am indebted to this book for the vast majority of my facts: any one who undertakes to write about Blake cannot be otherwise. Thus far, therefore, everything is plain: one has openly to acknowledge a genuine debt of gratitude to Mr. Gilchrist, and to run up the account freely.

The difficulty of Blake's biographers, subsequent to 1863, the date of Mr. Gilchrist's book, is of a different kind altogether. It is the difficulty of stating sufficiently high the extraordinary claims

of Blake to admiration and reverence, without slurring over those other considerations which need to be plainly and fully set forth if we would obtain any real idea of the man as he was,—of his total unlikeness to his contemporaries, of his amazing genius and noble performances in two arts, of the height by which he transcended other men, and the incapacity which he always evinced for performing at all what others accomplish easily. He could do vastly more than they, but he could seldom do the like. By some unknown process, he had soared to the top of a cloud-capped Alp while they were crouching in the valley: but to reach a middle station on the mountain was what they could readily manage step by step, while Blake found that ordinary achievement impracticable. He could not and he would not do it: the want of will, or rather the utter alienation of will, the resolve to soar (which was natural to him), and not to walk (which was unnatural and repulsive), constituted, or counted in stead of, an actual want of power. *Could* Blake think, and embody his thoughts, like other men? There are instances in which he both could do so, and has done it: but certain it is, regarding him in his most characteristic moods, that mostly he would not: and, in the case of so spacious, daring, and intuitive a mind, so vivid, uncompromising, exclusive, and peremptory a character, the aversion, when it reached a certain height, amounted to incapability. For "aversion" we might perhaps substitute the word "perversity:" Blake was the most perverse of mortals, except to his own ideal, his own inspiration. To these he was loyal beyond praise, and beyond words: to aught else,

equally impenetrable and contumacious. The moon partially eclipsed might be taken as no inapt image of Blake's mind: a glorious luminary, and not bedimmed or overclouded in its lucid part, but distinctly reft of light in a certain other portion. If those who urged him to do common things, or to do lofty things by common processes, were in the right, then Blake was not only in the wrong, but perverse, a "son of perdition." If Blake, on the other hand, was essentially right as to his aims and methods, then the rugged gradient of his perversity was also an ascending plane of heroism. Rapt in a passionate yearning, he realized, even on this earth and in his mortal body, a species of *nirvana*: his whole faculty, his whole personality, the very essence of his mind and mould, attained to absorption into his ideal ultimate,—into that which Dante's profound phrase designates "il Ben dell' intelletto."

Thus much may be truly and reverently said of Blake: something of the kind, indeed, cannot be left unsaid, if we would in any way appreciate, instead of merely disparaging and misconceiving, him. On certain grounds, in the totality of his intellect and aspiration, we must uphold and exalt him. So long as we consider Blake in these more general relations, to lower him would be to lower ourselves. The intrinsic greatness of the man and of his work is by this time patent and irrefutable:—clear to those persons who have examined the matter, and who are capable of entering into it with an understanding mind; contested, no doubt, by some others, and to the multitude unknown, but this goes for nothing as authority. When we proceed, however, to a more



strict analysis of the operations of Blake's intellect, we shall unquestionably find much to startle and disconcert us: not now because he fails to attempt ordinary things, or to perform them well, but because he does extraordinary things in an inconceivable—not to say an often insufferable—manner. In fact, the old much-urged question "Was Blake a madman?" presents itself to us, and challenges an answer. His diligent and discerning biographer, Mr. Gilchrist, says decisively "No": so does Mr. Swinburne, in that remarkable *Critical Essay*<sup>1</sup> which has done more towards clearing up the darkest recesses of Blake's mind, and the most chaotic wastes of his writings, than had ever before been either achieved or attempted. This question about Blake is one on which I must necessarily have formed some kind of opinion, and ought ere I close to express it: but for the present I forbear, preferring that the reader should see something of the evidence before the deduction is presented for his consideration.

The facts to be stated regarding Blake's outer life are few, and mostly (save so far as they bear directly upon the peculiarities of his mental constitution, and the resultant works in poetry and design) are of an ordinary character. The inner life is a mine of prodigies and problems: few of these can be thoroughly explored or solved, and of many we can here take no real count at all. The works—or rather (for many others have been lost) a certain proportion of the works—which

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<sup>1</sup> The books referred to are the *Life of William Blake*, by the late Alexander Gilchrist, 2 vols.: Macmillan and Co., 1863; and *William Blake, a Critical Essay*, by Algernon Charles Swinburne: Hotten, 1868.

the painter-poet produced in his incessantly laborious life, remain to us, and will, within our restricted scope and opportunities, form a principal object of our attention here.

## 2.—THE EVENTS OF BLAKE'S LIFE.

London gave birth to William Blake; and, in doing so, produced one of the strangest of all the many-millioned natives of the great city, and one moreover of the most curious and abnormal personages of the later eighteenth and earlier nineteenth centuries; a man not forestalled by predecessors, nor to be classed with contemporaries, nor to be replaced by known or readily surmisable successors. He was born on the 28th of November 1757,<sup>1</sup> at No. 28 Broad Street, Carnaby Market, near Golden Square; a district at that time of very respectable standing, though now fully as dingy as decorous. No. 28 is a corner-house at the narrower end of the street, which varies considerably in width. He was the second son of James and Catharine Blake, and the second child out of a family of five. The father carried on business as a hosier, and was a moderately prosperous man: in religion a Dissenter. The first child, and great favourite of the parents, was John, who turned out badly and enlisted in

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<sup>1</sup> A MS. which I have seen, the production of Mr. Frederick Tatham, who knew Blake well in his latter years, gives "20" November as the date of birth. The other date, "28" November, is assigned by Mr. Gilchrist; and his accuracy in such matters leads me to adopt it, though I am not distinctly aware whether he did more than reproduce this date from Allan Cunningham's entertaining but comparatively slight memoir.

the army. Then, next after William, came James; of him, as well as of the youngest brother Robert, and of a still younger sister, William's junior by seven years, we shall hear a little more as we proceed.

William Blake's education was of the scantiest, being confined to reading and writing: arithmetic also may be guessed at, but is not recorded, and very probably his capacity for acquiring or retaining that item of knowledge was far below the average. In boyhood he was fond of little country jaunts; these were readily obtainable at that time by a resident in the Golden Square district, remote though it now is from the outskirts—themselves interminable—of the capital, ever spreading, and ever the more closely cooping up the teeming turmoil of its denizens. He began drawing very early, becoming (as Allan Cunningham has said) "at ten years of age an artist, and at twelve a poet." This last-named age is even, it would seem, too advanced by a year for the fact; for the *Poetical Sketches*, Blake's first printed volume, were stated in the prefatory words to have been begun in his "twelfth year,"—and probably some other verses, still more childish in point of date, not to speak of execution, would have preceded them. He copied prints in his boyhood, and haunted sale-rooms: his parents, more especially his mother, seem to have encouraged this artistic turn. In 1767 he began attending the drawing-school of Mr. Pars in the Strand, a well-known academy, which pupils used to frequent as preparatory to the one which flourished in St. Martin's Lane. Here he had the opportunity of studying from the

antique, but not from the life. At sale-rooms he bought engravings low, and selected them high; a Raphael or a Michael Angelo, a Durer or a Hemskerck. Certainly this was not the taste of the time; but the little lad Blake already moved intellectually within his own insight, as a planet within its own orbit. His own insight was always to him his epoch, his proof, and his vindication: other people—other boys in his boyhood, in his manhood other men—might shift for themselves, and live practically in a different age of the world. To him it mattered not. "I am right, and they are wrong," more or less definitely worded, was his reply. "I am happy" (he has written in certain notes upon Reynolds, not exactly squaring with the views of the British connoisseur) "I cannot say that Raphael ever was, from my earliest childhood, hidden from me. I saw and I knew immediately the difference between Raphael and Rubens."

The career of a painter would have been the natural one for Blake, with such capacities and tastes, to adopt; and he did to some considerable extent pursue it in after life. His father's means, however, were not such as to put this profession conveniently within the lad's reach: he was consequently bound to an engraver, and the engraving branch of art was that which he followed ever afterwards as his regular calling. In 1771, at the age of fourteen, he became one of the apprentices of the well-reputed engraver James Basire, who (domiciled in No. 31 Great Queen Street, Lincoln's Inn Fields) was employed on the work of the Antiquarian and the Royal Societies. For the former body he issued, in 1774, the largest engrav-

ing that had as yet been ever executed upon one plate, about forty-seven inches by twenty-seven, *The Field of the Cloth of Gold*, after the picture at Windsor. Basire's style was hard, dry, and firm: Blake naturally adopted it during his apprenticeship, and retained not a little of it in his after practice. I speak, of course, of his ordinary engravings, frequently from the works of other artists, executed in the recognized professional method; for those other engravings which he produced to illustrate many of his own writings, and in which he used processes known only to himself, are of an entirely different kind. The adoption of his instructor's style was so far well suited to Blake as that it wholly eschewed frivolity and trick: he often, in conversation or in writing, continued to uphold its superiority to the more facile and popular manner of other practitioners. It was not, however, attractive to common eyes, nor fully satisfying to those of an artist, and it must have retarded rather than promoted Blake's success with publishers and purchasers.

The master and the apprentice had reason to be mutually well-pleased during their connection: the former was upright and kind, and the latter made steady and satisfactory progress. After a while, however, some discordances arose. Two other apprentices came to the establishment towards the beginning of Blake's third year. They proved less docile than the senior pupil, and won him partly over to their side; and in consequence he was sent out of the house, from time to time, to make drawings in Westminster Abbey, and in various old churches, for the antiquary Gough. On some other subjects Blake and his fellow-

apprentices were less harmonious; they wrangled over metaphysical problems, on which Blake, we may be sure, was very positive, and his opponents probably inexpert, and proportionately indisposed to be convinced. His present employment indisposed Blake with a decided love of Gothic feeling and form, which (although in a very rudimentary condition) can often be traced throughout his original work. He sketched the tombs in the Abbey, engraved a selection from his studies there, and made drawings from history, and from fancy. One of his engravings, dated as early as 1773, has a peculiarity of subject foreshadowing what he did in later years. It is inscribed *Joseph of Arimathea among the Rocks of Albion*, and is founded on a design by Michael Angelo. There is also the inscription: "This is one of the Gothic artists who built the Cathedrals in what we call the Dark Ages, wandering about in sheepskins and goat-skins, of whom the world was not worthy. Such were the Christians in all ages." During his apprentice days Blake's chief pleasure was in making drawings and verses, to be hung up in his mother's room. His term came to an end in 1778.

He next studied in the Antique School of the Royal Academy, under the keeper Mr. Moser—not with unmixed satisfaction. He has left us an amusing anecdote of his having been looking over prints from Raphael and Michael Angelo in the Academy library, when Moser extolled in their stead the works of Rubens and Lebrun. "These things that you call *finished*," replied Blake to Moser, "are not even begun; how then can they be finished?" He drew a great deal from the antique, and afterwards also from

the living model; but he disliked the latter practice. "The life," in this condition, appeared to him "more like death," and "smelling of mortality." Another anecdote, which may appertain to this period of studentship or probably to a rather later date, is that of Blake's interview with Sir Joshua Reynolds. It may help to account for the extreme animosity which the ideal artist always showed against the consummately-gifted portrait-painter; though assuredly the deeper grounds of this feeling were matter of genuine conviction, and not of any mere personal exasperation. "Once I remember<sup>1</sup> his talking to me of Reynolds," writes a surviving friend; "he became furious at what the latter had dared to say of his early works. When a very young man, he had called on Reynolds, to show him some designs, and had been recommended to work with less extravagance and more simplicity, and to correct his drawing. This Blake seemed to regard as an affront never to be forgotten. He was very indignant when he spoke of it." No doubt the censure of the drawing of so severe and forcible a draughtsman as Blake, coming from one of so much loose facility as Reynolds, was peculiarly galling, notwithstanding the great difference in age and professional standing.

Blake, still domiciled with his father in Broad Street, was now beginning to paint water-colours, and also to engrave, on his own account, for publishers. He executed prints for the *Novelists' Magazine*—among others, some after Stothard—and for the *Ladies' Magazine*. An engraver named

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<sup>1</sup> This passage is extracted from Mr. Gilchrist's book.



Trotter introduced him to Stothard, two years his senior; and Stothard made him known to Flaxman, who was at present subsisting on his work for Wedgwood. Flaxman professed to be—and one may fairly believe that he really was—a sincere admirer and firm friend of Blake; although the latter, at times, believed the contrary, as is amply proved by an epigram or two reproduced in the present volume, as well as by occasional passages in Blake's prose writings. Afterwards the visionary painter knew likewise Fuseli, whose life, prolonged to the age of eighty-three, ceased (in April 1825) only about two years before that of Blake himself. Him Blake always admired as an artist, and valued as a friend; indeed, if we may credit one of his own splenetic utterances in doggrel, Fuseli, being "both Turk and Jew," was "the only man who did not make him almost spue." The pithy utterance of the Swiss painter, "Blake is damned good to steal from," attested the genuinely appreciative estimate with which he repaid his friend's good opinion. The "stealing," according to Blake, was done by both Stothard and Flaxman; in other words, Blake supplied ideas, or designs more or less completely suggested, and his acquaintances availed themselves freely of these, and worked them up into materials of fame and fortune. The transparent sincerity of Blake's character does not allow of our wholly discrediting these charges. In the case of Stothard, we shall see that the accusation takes eventually a more defined form. In that of Flaxman, it does not appear that any *surreptitious* appropriation of Blake's ideas is imputed, and therefore, supposing Flaxman to have been always



sincerely friendly to Blake, the charge does not bear hard on the sculptor's character—only on the grievous conditions under which the more inventive Blake had to work and live, while another received the credit. Blake, it should be remembered, was an exceedingly impulsive, and in a certain sense a violent, man—always, at the least, vehement and unmeasured. He knew and keenly felt, spite of his extreme superiority to worldly self-interest, that he was not receiving, as years passed over his head, his due of reputation from the public; and I would be quite disposed, in equity as well as in inclination, to reduce to a minimum the charge raised by him against Flaxman,<sup>1</sup> and in most respects against Stothard as well. Clearly, he was for years on good terms with Stothard, and still longer bore a true affection to Flaxman. If at times his heart burned within him, and he blurted out something that jars upon the reader's nerves and recollection, let us not suffer this to tell too severely against either Flaxman or himself; but, while not entirely exonerating Flaxman, which would amount to entirely inculcating Blake, let us think a little kindly allowance can be made for both, and lay over the infirmities or the misapprehensions of both illustrious friends one fold the closer of the veil of oblivion.

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<sup>1</sup> The charge is formulated as follows in a MS. composition by Blake, never published until by Mr. Gilchrist, in his second volume, p. 156:—"Flaxman cannot deny that one of the very first monuments he did I gratuitously designed for him. At the same time he was blackening my character as an artist to Macklin, my employer [a publisher], as Macklin told me at the time, and posterity will know."

The year 1780 was that in which Blake first exhibited a picture in the Royal Academy: this was the *Death of Earl Godwin*, probably executed in water-colours. He continued exhibiting at the institution from time to time—only five pictures in all—up to the year 1808, when he exhibited *Christ in the Sepulchre guarded by Angels*, and *A Dream*: these were his final contributions. About the time when he first began thus exhibiting he was “keeping company” with a lively girl to whom the name of Clara Woods has with great likelihood been assigned: she proved impatient, and he was jealous. At the house of Catharine Boucher, a market-gardener at Battersea (where possibly Blake was just then lodging), he was once complaining of his amorous distresses. The daughter of the house said: “I pity you from my heart.” “Do you pity me?” asked Blake. “I do most sincerely.” “Then I love you more than I can say.” “And I love you,” responded the daughter. This was the beginning and the turning-point of the courtship which resulted in Blake’s marriage. Catharine Sophia Boucher was one of the youngest of a large family, a slim and graceful (or in the words as has been said, “very pretty”) brunette, with white hands, which had attracted the painter’s notice, and expressive features. Belonging to a family she did to a very humble stock, she had received next to no education. In the marriage-contract she only signed her mark, when, on the 1st of August 1782, in her twenty-first year, she became the painter’s bride. He elicited the dormant powers of her mind; taught her to read and write; and trained her to the working-off of his designs, and to colouring them now and

again, and even to some skill in designing, in a class of subject-matter and general treatment closely enough resembling that which stamps his own works with so marvellous an individuality. She was, besides, a good thrifty manager, as the always narrow means of the married couple urgently required her to be; and a handy cook also in a plain unpretentious way, which was fortunate in a household where no servant was kept. In other more important respects—in short, in every sense—she was a most excellent, believing, and devoted wife. If Blake had visions, she credited them, though without professing to see the same appearances which were manifest to him, and she actually caught from him a visionary faculty of her own: if he required companionship, she was always there; help, she yielded it affectionately and efficiently; service, drudgery, she was unstinting of both. “She would get up in the night” (says Mr. John Thomas Smith, commonly called “Nollekens Smith”) “when he was under his very fierce inspirations, which were as if they would tear him asunder, while he was yielding himself to the Muse, or whatever else it could be called, sketching and writing. And so terrible a task did this seem to be that she had to sit motionless and silent, only to stay him mentally, without moving hand or foot: this for hours, and night after night.”

In some of the earlier years of the marriage, indeed, it is said that grave conflicts of feeling and of will arose between Blake and his wife—jealousy on her part being the essential cause, or rather something on his part which occasioned her jealousy. This will surprise no one who is

izant of the full range of Blake's writings, who consequently knows that his views of sexual relation and of the marriage-tie, along with other burning questions, were of the most audacious possible kind—more conformable to the quality of an oriental patriarch or a religious social innovator than of an English engraver of the eighteenth century. It has even been said that at one time he proposed to add a second wife to the household. This may or may not be true as fact: as an exemplification of theory, those who have more than skimmed Blake's works know that such ideas were not unfamiliar to his mind. The difference would have been not between the startling act and the many startling words expressed or implied, but merely between the character of startling which belongs respectively to the act and to many words. Be this affair of the proposed second wife true or not, certain it is that none of his few biographers gives any distinct information of *de facto* breaches of marital faith on Blake's part: he seems to have lived with regularity, and observance of the practical obligations of man in society, in this as in all other regards. Any differences between himself and his wife which may have chequered their harmony in the earlier years of wedlock seem afterwards to have subsided wholly; and we can, without either uncertainty as to the external facts, or misgiving to the internal conditions, contemplate in the case of William and Catharine Blake—somewhat ardently matched couple as they would appear to have been originally—a genuine marriage. Affection was truly and warmly interchanged between them; while guidance and elevating in-

fluence on the one side were requited by a perpetuality of service on the other.

The marriage, which proved a childless was not particularly pleasing to Blake's fit. The young couple set up house at No. 23 ( Street, Leicester Fields. Soon afterwards ] began to see something of literary and fashion society, through his being introduced by Fla: to Mrs. Mathew, the lady whose *conversazio* No. 27 Rathbone Place kept up at that much of the vogue of the original "blue-stock meetings. Here Blake would read his poems also sing them; for, though he knew nothir musical science or notation, he had set sor his verses to airs which, according to Mr. Smith, were "most singularly beautiful," "were noted down by musical professors." love was for simple, not elaborate, m in his old age he would still somet sing when among intimate friends. These formances gave great pleasure at Mrs. Matl parties, where Blake was for a time a wel guest: but his "unbending deportment, "manly firmness of opinion," stood in the w: any such social success, and somewhere tow 1785 he ceased—or almost wholly ceased—t appear in the house. Such a result is more intelligible. Blake was not only a visionary mystic, and a daring speculator in religion morals, but he was and always continued : publican, and enemy of kings and of war, moreover an utter nonconformist in his special work of art and of poetry. As reg republicanism, he maintained that the very s of his forehead, larger over the eyes than al

marked him out for that form of political opinion. And on all these debateable and exciting topics alike he was ever ready to make the most positive and exclusive affirmations, to pronounce, decree, and bear of no denial or qualification. His attitude, in short, was always that of an inspired seer: the thing was so because he saw it so, and he saw it so, not by a bodily and argumentative eye, but by a spiritual and intuitional one. Truly loveable in personal character, he conciliated a certain good-will in a number of the most unpromising quarters; but a man of this kind was plainly not destined to be of the elect in the regions of small-talk. One circumstance of some importance in his career resulted from his acquaintance with Mrs. Mathew and her husband. The latter, the Rev. Henry Mathew, combined with Flaxman in causing Blake's first volume of verse, the *Poetical Sketches*, to be printed in 1783; and the obliging clergyman wrote the few words of preface to that selection. The impression was presented to Blake—too poor now and very generally afterwards to launch out into any such expenses for himself; but it was not published in the ordinary sense.

Blake's father, dying in the summer of 1784, was succeeded in the hosiery business by his third son James, a person not wholly unlike William in a visionary (more especially a Swedenborgian) tendency, but otherwise by no means in sympathy with him. One regrets to hear that, in later years, the two brothers would not speak to one another; an estrangement for which no distinct reason is on record, unless one can say that the hosier's general disapproval of the unworldliness

and wilfulness of the mystic, and the mystic's scorn of the peddling and scraping habits of the hosier, furnish a not insufficient explanation. Blake set up shop next door to his brother (No. 27) as a printseller and engraver, in partnership with one of his fellow-apprentices, Mr. Parker, the firm being styled "Parker and Blake." Mrs. Blake helped in the shop. This association continued till 1787, when Blake, disagreeing with Parker, seceded. Meanwhile his favourite brother Robert, some five years younger than himself, had been with him as a gratuitous pupil in engraving; he too, like the tractable wife, took to making original designs marked by the fraternal influence. An early death closed a life of no small promise. Robert died towards the beginning of 1787: William saw his soul ascend through the ceiling, "clapping its hands for joy." After his death, and the severance of the partnership with Parker, Blake removed to the neighbouring Poland Street, No. 28. Here the spirit of Robert rendered him an essential service; directing him, in a nocturnal vision, how to proceed in bringing out poems and designs in conjunction, all of them the produce of his own hand in every executive respect, no less than of his own mind. This question—the difficulty of producing poetical works to the public when he had no money to pay for printing—had embarrassed William's mind for some while before 1787, when the *Songs of Innocence* issued forth: the spirit of Robert solved the problem. "This method," says Mr. Gilchrist, "to which Blake henceforth consistently adhered for multiplying his works, was quite an original one. It consisted in a species of engraving in relief both words and

s. The verse was written, and the designs marginal embellishment outlined, on the with an impervious liquid,—probably the stopping-out varnish of engravers. Then the white parts, or lights, (the remainder of the plate, that is) were eaten away with aquafortis or acid, so that the outline of letter and design was left prominent, as in stereotype. On these plates he printed off in any tint—black, brown, blue—required to be the prevailing (or ground) colour in his facsimiles: red he used in the letterpress. The page was then coloured by hand in imitation of the original drawing, and with more or less variety of detail in the local

He mixed his colours with diluted glue, as was revealed to him by St. Joseph; Mrs. Blake engraved the books in boards, and often assisted in drawing the designs,—sometimes, especially in the designs which she treated after her husband's death, and in adding the colour: in fact, as Mr. Gilchrist writes, out, every item of the process was done by Blake with his wife's willing aid, save only the drawing of the paper.

In the same year, 1789, followed *The Book of Job*; in 1790, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*; 1791 (sole book by Blake that was both printed and published in the ordinary way), *The French Revolution, a Poem in 7 Books: Book I.* The instalments of this rhapsodical work never sold, nor is the value of the first Book such as to raise any grave regret for their suppression. None of these productions made the least way to the public at the time: but, as years rolled on, the sale, within his more or less immediate acquaintance, of the *Songs of Innocence*



and some other books engraved in the same way, though often of a widely different character of writing and design (such as the *Daughters of Albion*, *Urizen*, *Jerusalem*, &c., to be hereafter spoken of), constituted one of the least precarious and least paltry sources of income for the spiritual-minded Blake. That his income was always exiguous is attested by many incidental facts; as, for instance, that he was often compelled to work new designs on his old copper-plates. His selling price for the united *Songs of Innocence and Experience* (the latter came out in 1794) was from £1.10s. to £2.2s.: but occasionally, in his latter years, he received as much as £5. 5s., or, from friends who were cognizant of his necessities, yet larger sums. The highest of these amounts can be barely a third of what a good copy would now sell for.

Passing lightly over some of the work which Blake executed towards this time—such as his few designs, engraved by himself, for Mary Wollstonecraft's *Tales for Children*—we find him living on good terms with the bookseller Johnson, of St Paul's Churchyard, and attending the dinner which the latter gave, and at which, along with Fuseli, several of the political extremists of the day were wont to gather—Price, Priestley, Milnes, Wollstonecraft, Godwin, Holcroft, Paine. Blake went so far as to put-on the *bonnet rouge*, and walk the streets with it; being, it is said, the only one of the set who would adventure thus patently to profess his fetterless politics. This was some little while before the prison-massacres of September 1792, which induced Blake to re-alter his head-dress. Towards the latter date, Paine, who had then been elected to the French Nation

Convention, was under prosecution in England for publishing his *Rights of Man*; and but for a timely warning from Blake—"You must not go home, or you are a dead man"—he might probably have delayed his departure to the land of the Republic, and would in that case have been inevitably arrested, for an order to detain him was received at Dover almost as soon as he had set sail.

In 1793 Blake quitted Poland Street for No. 13 Hercules Buildings, Lambeth; and, in May of the same year, he published his little book of symbolic designs entitled *For Children* (some copies, *For the Sees*), *The Gates of Paradise*. This was rapidly followed by the *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, and by *America, a Prophecy*; both still in 1793. In the ensuing year he re-engraved Flaxman's designs (which had previously been treated by Piroli) from the *Odyssey*—his style of engraving being at this time distinguished from that of most other practitioners by a much greater proportion of etching. It was not till after an interval of many years—1817—that he again engraved after Flaxman, the *Works and Days of Hesiod*. In 1794 he also issued *Europe, a Prophecy* (being a sequel to the *America*), and *The Book of Urizen, Part I.*, as well as a small quarto volume containing twenty-three engraved and coloured designs, without letter-press.

Towards the same time he made the acquaintance of Mr. Thomas Butts, of Fitzroy Square, by far the best purchasing patron whom he ever had, and one who (as testified in a letter from the grateful designer) "always left him altogether to his own judgment," which was indeed

the only conceivable way for getting work out of such a man. This gentleman went on for nearly thirty years buying the paintings of Blake—ordinary water-colours, along with what the artist termed tempera-pictures or frescoes; for oil, after a few experiments (dictated, as he said, by demons such as Titian and Correggio), was a vehicle which he utterly eschewed. He would not even tolerate the historical account of the invention of oil-colours, in their modern application, by John van Eyck (or more properly by his elder brother, Hubert), but denounced this as a “silly story and known falsehood,” and termed the process a “villainy” for which Rubens or Vandyck was accountable. “Oil was not used, except by blundering ignorance, till after Vandyck’s time. Mr. Butts, at the end of 1805, engaged Blake, at the pay of £26. 5s. per annum, to teach drawing to his son; he would sometimes take from the artist a drawing per week, and continued his commissions, more or less, up to the year 1822 thereabouts. At last he fell off, and almost lost sight of his old friend when age and penury were weighing heavy upon him; it appears that he found it increasingly difficult to avoid offending Blake, whose sense of independence smarted at the slightest touch of interference or advice, and found expression, at times, in very outspoken and intolerant terms. Something also may have been due to the fact that the house of Mr. Butts was then already crammed with the painter’s works.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Butts (as stated in Mr. Gilchrist’s book, vol. i. p. 115) was the authority for the now often-repeated story that Blake and his wife were found by the narrator sitting

The year 1795 witnessed the completion of the "Prophetic Books" regarding the four quarters of the globe—*Africa* and *Asia* having now been published, under the general title of *The Song of Los*. This name may, however, with more propriety be regarded as comprehending the *America* and *Europe* as well; for "Los" (in Blake's arbitrary and seldom interpretable nomenclature) is "Time," as Mr. Swinburne, diving into the "sunless and sonorous gulfs" of the *Jerusalem*, has succeeded in finding out, not a little to the advantage of the dozen or so of people who possess some dim acquaintance with this class of Blake's writings. *The Book of Ahania* followed, also in 1795, and may count as constituting the second Part of the otherwise uncontinued *Urizen*. Amid all this hurtle of amazing design, and welter of baffling prophecy, Blake continued his plodding work as an engraver after other artists, eminent or undistinguished, varied occasionally by some works of his own. One of these was issued in 1794, inscribed *Ezekiel; Take away from thee the*

asked in the summer-house of their Hercules Buildings home, and that the painter called out—"Come in! It's only Adam and Eve, you know." This practice was repeated, it is alleged, more than once. Mr. Linnell, however, (see Mr. Swinburne's book, p. 299) peremptorily denies that such a transaction ever took place. It must be admitted, looking (if nothing else) to the question of dates, that the fact might have occurred, without Mr. Linnell's knowing, by any possibility, anything about it, one way or the other. The anecdote, however, has a mythic air; it has already been related oftener than was needful for such a triviality, in the case of so lofty a man as Blake; and, though I have not deemed it well to pass the matter over in total silence, I think the time has come when a foot-note, joined to a caveat against too implicit credence, amply suffices for it.

*desire of thine eyes* (the death of the proph- wife). Another is from *Job*—"What is man, thou shouldst try him every moment?" The figures in these prints are the largest that Blake ever engraved. One of the most important commissions which he at any time received (though insignificant in point of remuneration, being probably only £1. 1s. per plate, design and engraving was that for illustrating Young's *Night Thoughts*. This re-edition was undertaken in 1796 by J. Edwards, the publisher in New Bond Street. Part I. appeared in the Autumn of 1797, going to the end of the Fourth Night, and containing forty-three engraved designs; an explanation of the subjects, not written by Blake himself, was published along with them. The project was encouraged by the public, and no second part ever came out.<sup>1</sup>

In the first year of the nineteenth century a change came over Blake's manner of illustration. Flaxman had introduced him to Mr. Hayley, author of that feeble drizzle of verse the *Triumph of Temper*, and of other works which shared, along with that, the lavish commendations of the critics in those days. William Hayley was a coun-

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<sup>1</sup> As these pages are passing through the press, I observe in the *Athenæum* for the 14th March 1874, an advertisement inserted by Mr. H. W. Birtwhistle, Halifax. As it gives a more precise account than I had ever seen elsewhere of Blake's work for the *Night Thoughts*, I add it here:—"Young's *Night Thoughts*, with the 537 original colour drawings, by Blake. 2 vols., 21 inches by 16, red morocco. The letter-press, 8½ by 6¼ inches, occupies the centre of each page; and around each page is the drawing, enclosed in a ruled and coloured border. The drawings are clean, perfect, and the colours are bright and fresh as when first put on

gentleman of some fortune, having a seat at Eartham in Sussex, not far from Bognor: he delighted to style himself "the Hermit of Eartham." He had some good qualities, to which the misdeed of writing unreadable verses, and of getting contemporaries to read them with plaudits, ought not to blind us. He was gifted with amiability, willingness to oblige, the love and the habit of culture according to his lights. Hayley, now aged fifty-six, undertook to write a Life of his friend Cowper, who had died in this same year 1800 (25 April); and Blake was proposed as engraver of the illustrations to the work. He willingly closed with the offer; partly (as he himself has recorded) because in London Fuseli, the bookseller Johnson, and others, made "great objections to my doing anything but the mere drudgery of business, and intimations that, if I do not confine myself to this, I shall not live." For the purpose now in question, it was arranged that Blake should dwell at Felpham, a sea-side village adjacent to Eartham. This latter place had now been let by Hayley, who was himself also living at Felpham in a turreted "marine cottage" of his own construction. Blake took another and very ordinary cottage, still standing, at a rent of £20 a year: his only sister, as well as his wife, lived with him there, though in general, it would seem, she was supported by her other brother James. Blake was at first exceedingly delighted with Felpham, its inhabitants, his personal position and prospects, his cottage, its splendid sea-view and general surroundings. A letter which he addressed to Flaxman on the 21st of September 1800 has often been printed; but, as it is the most readily available

among the very few letters which remain to us from the same hand, it must once again reappear in our pages.

“DEAR SCULPTOR OF ETERNITY,

“We are safe arrived at our cottage, which is more beautiful than I thought it, and more convenient. It is a perfect model for cottages, and I think for palaces of magnificence—only enlarging, not altering, its proportions, and adding ornaments and not principles. Nothing can be more grand than its simplicity and usefulness. Simple without intricacy, it seems to be the spontaneous expression of humanity, congenial to the wants of man. No other-formed house can ever please me so well; nor shall I ever be persuaded, I believe, that it can be improved either in beauty or use.

“Mr. Hayley received us with his usual brotherly affection. I have begun to work. Felpham is a sweet place for study, because it is more spiritual than London. Heaven opens here on all sides her golden gates; her windows are not obstructed by vapours; voices of celestial inhabitants are more distinctly heard, and their forms more distinctly seen; and my cottage is also a shadow of their houses. My wife and sister are both well, courting Neptune for an embrace.

“Our journey was very pleasant, and, though we had a great deal of luggage, no grumbling. All was cheerfulness and good-humour on the road; and yet we could not arrive at our cottage before half-past eleven at night, owing to the necessary shifting of our luggage from one chaise to another—for we had seven different chaises, and



as many different drivers. We set out between six and seven in the morning of Thursday, with sixteen heavy boxes and portfolios full of prints.

“And now begins a new life, because another covering of earth is shaken off. I am more famed in heaven for my works than I could well conceive. In my brain are studies and chambers filled with books and pictures of old, which I wrote and painted in ages of eternity before my mortal life; and these works are the delight and study of archangels. Why then should I be anxious about the riches or fame of mortality? The Lord our Father will do for us and with us according to His divine will, for our good.

“You, O dear Flaxman, are a sublime archangel—my friend and companion from eternity. In the divine bosom is our dwelling-place. I look back into the regions of reminiscence, and behold our ancient days before this earth appeared in its vegetated mortality to my mortal vegetated eyes. I see our houses of eternity, which can never be separated, though our mortal vehicles should stand at the remotest corners of heaven from each other.

“Farewell, my best friend. Remember me and my wife in love and friendship to our dear Mrs. Flaxman, whom we ardently desire to entertain beneath our thatched roof of rusted gold. And believe me for ever to remain your grateful and affectionate

“WILLIAM BLAKE.

“Felpham, September 21st 1800, Sunday morning.”

In a different letter we find Blake saying: “One thing of real consequence I have accomplished by



coming into the country, which is to me consolation enough; namely, I have re-collected all my scattered thoughts on art, and resumed my primitive and original ways of execution in both painting and engraving, which, in the confusion of London, I had very much lost and obliterated from my mind."

At the end of 1801 Hayley began some *Ballads on Anecdotes relating to Animals*, which Blake illustrated: the proceeds of sale, if any there were, went to the artist by the author's good-will. Most of his working hours, always most industriously filled up, were spent in the literary squire's house. The illustrations for the projected *Life of Cowper* were engraved in due course; and in 1803 some designs which Maria Flaxman, the sculptor's sister, had produced in illustration of the *Triumphs of Temper*: these remained unpublished until 1807. Miniature-painting also now occupied Blake to some small extent: he produced a portrait, in this style, of the Rev. John Johnson, Cowper's cousin, and others of some of the neighbouring gentry, to whom Hayley introduced him. Generally, he accepted whatever commissions came in his way, apposite to his powers or otherwise: one however, offered to him through Hayley's introduction, he declined—that of painting a set of hand-screens for a lady. He learned something of Greek during his connection with the Hermit: and it may here be observed that the extreme meagreness of his early schooling was supplemented afterwards by some smattering of Latin, and by studying French sufficiently to read that language, and also, at the age of sixty, as much Italian as was needed for skimming Dante.

It must not be supposed, however, that all went smooth with Blake at Felpham. Among the few of his extant letters are ten addressed to his attached friend Mr. Butts; some of these show how sorely, after a while, the fiery idealist chafed under Hayley's patronage—his "genteel ignorance and polite disapprobation," his "affected contempt" and "affected loftiness." He demurred to Blake's style of working, both in design and in poetry; and, shortly before the date of the painter's letter of 6 July 1803, there had evidently been a "scene" between the two ill-assorted *collaborateurs*. Blake, in his own view at least, had had the better of this. He had been set at liberty by his spiritual friends, after a long period of probation, "to remonstrate against former conduct, and to demand justice and truth; which (he adds) I have done in so effectual a manner that my antagonist is silenced completely, and I have compelled what should have been of freedom—my just right as an artist and as a man." In any connection of this sort, between men so radically and irremediably unlike, a time is pretty sure to come when each considers himself rather scurvily used by the other: each sees so clearly the justice and urgency of his own cause, and is by the very constitution of his mind so unable to discern any plausibility in the pleas put forward by the opposite party. We cannot therefore be in the least surprised that Blake became incensed against Hayley: but in justice to the latter we shall do well to remember that the painter's earlier letters had spoken of him in very different terms; for instance (10 May 1801, after an experience of nearly a year and a half)—"Mr. Hayley acts like a prince; I am at complete ease."

While Blake was irritated against Hayley, there occurred a strange matter-of-fact interruption to the course of so imaginative and esoteric a life. This again gave Hayley an opportunity of proving the substantial kindness of his feeling; nor was Blake slow to acknowledge as much, and to withdraw, in a subsequent letter to Mr. Butts, the harshness of his animadversions upon the Hermit of Eartham. In truth, after making every allowance for Blake, we may not irrationally conclude that the good-humour of the Hermit also had at times been rather strained by the author of *Jerusalem*—a man who affirmed himself to be “under the direction of messengers from heaven, daily and nightly.” If Hayley always managed to keep his temper, those “*Triumphs*” which his goose-quill had celebrated in exalted verse had now been further signalized by his own deportment.—Blake himself shall relate for us the vexatious and anomalous incident which befell him in the August of 1803.

“I am at present in a bustle to defend myself against a very unwarrantable warrant from a Justice of Peace in Chichester, which was taken out against me by a private in Captain Leathes’ troop of 1st or Royal Dragoons, for an assault and seditious words. The wretched man has terribly perjured himself, as has his comrade; for, as to sedition, not one word relating to the King or Government was spoken by either him or me. His enmity arises from my having turned him out of my garden, into which he was invited as an assistant by a gardener at work therein, without my knowledge that he was so invited. I desired him, as politely as possible, to go out of

the garden : he made me an impertinent answer. I insisted on his leaving the garden : he refused. I still persisted in desiring his departure. He then threatened to knock out my eyes, with many abominable imprecations, and with some contempt for my person : it affronted my foolish pride. I therefore took him by the elbows, and pushed him before me till I had got him out. There I intended to have left him ; but he, turning about, put himself into a posture of defiance, threatening and swearing at me. I, perhaps foolishly and perhaps not, stepped out at the gate, and, putting aside his blows, took him again by the elbows, and, keeping his back to me, pushed him forward down the road about fifty yards—he all the while endeavouring to turn round and strike me, and raging and cursing, which drew out several neighbours. At length, when I had got him to where he was quartered, which was very quickly done, we were met at the gate by the master of the house, the Fox Inn, who is the proprietor of my cottage, and his wife and daughter, and the man's comrade, and several other people. My landlord compelled the soldiers to go indoors, after many abusive threats against me and my wife from the two soldiers ; but not one word of threat on account of sedition was uttered at that time. This method of revenge was planned between them after they had got together into the stable. I have for witnesses [five persons, present at the time, who will disprove the allegation as to use of any seditious words]. I have been forced to find bail. Mr. Hayley was kind enough to come forward, and Mr. Seagrave, printer at Chester : Mr. H. in £100, and Mr. S. in £50. . .

I have heard that my accuser is a disgraced sergeant: his name is John Scholfield."

Blake's trial came on at the Chichester Quarter Sessions on the 11th of January 1804. He was charged with "having uttered seditious treasonable expressions, such as 'Damn the King, damn all his subjects, damn his soldiers, they are all slaves: when Bonaparte comes, it will be a throat for cut-throat, and the weakest must go to the wall: I will help him,' &c., &c." Hayley, though suffering from a severe accident in the riot, attended and spoke up for the defendant's character; and a vigorous cross-examination damaged the principal witness for the prosecution. The result was an acquittal, which was received with the applause of the auditory. Blake, mindful of the republican and anti-warlike sentiments entertained by himself, and of the many instances which he had made these prominent, as in the case of Paine, was wont to aver that the soldier must have been sent by the Government or some person in authority to entrap him. This the reader may not be disposed to believe; but it is certainly rather curious that the soldier, in his encounter with Blake was wholly fortuitous and unplanned, should have hit upon that very ground of accusation against him, and have untruthfully charged him with using that very sort of language, which his antecedents rendered *primâ facie* probable.

The patronage of Hayley, the sojourn at Ham, were now played out: they had become irksome to a genius and a character in whose compromise found no place, and early in 1804 Blake returned to London. "The visions

angry with me at Felpham," was a phrase of his after years; and the letters which he had addressed from that village to Mr. Butts leave no doubt that considerations of that kind were very prominent at the time in determining his resolve. It had turned out that at Felpham voices of celestial inhabitants were *not* more distinctly heard, nor their forms more distinctly seen," than in London, spite of the conviction expressed in Blake's letter to Flaxman already quoted. He took lodgings on the first floor of No. 17 South Molton Street, Oxford Street; and soon issued thence the astounding scriptures which he had been elaborating at Felpham, named respectively *Jerusalem, the Emanation of the Giant Albion*, and *Milton, a Poem in Two Books*. These works were not milk for babes, nor strabour for Hayleys. In the preface to the *Jerusalem*, Blake speaks of that composition as having been "dictated" to him; and other expressions of his prove that he regarded it rather as a revelation of which he was the scribe than as the product of his own inventing and fashioning brain. Blake considered it "the grandest poem that this world contains;" adding, "I may praise it, since I dare not pretend to be any other than the secretary—the authors are in eternity." In an earlier letter (25th April 1803) he had said: "I have written this poem from immediate dictation, twelve or sometimes twenty or thirty lines at a time, without premeditation, and even against my will."

The *Jerusalem* and the *Milton* are the last of the "Prophetic Books," properly to be so called, that ever saw the light, though not the last that

Blake wrote. So curt a performance as that of *Abel* (issued in 1822), being besides de pictorial design to accompany its words, be taken into account; moreover, it appears to have been composed and engraved as far back as 1788. Others—scores of MSS., a larger number than the writings of Shakspeare and Milton united—were produced, but no publisher could be obtained for them. “Well,” Blake would say after some futile application, “it is published elsewhere, and beautifully bound!” According to himself, he had done six or seven epics as long as Homer, and twenty tragedies as long as *Macbeth*—an assertion not perhaps to be accepted literally. One of his writings is referred to by Mr. Crabb Robinson under the term “a Vision of Genesis, as understood by a Christian Visionary.”

It was not destined that Blake should go on to writing, as author or as amanuensis, such works as the *Jerusalem* and the *Milton*, in entire solitude and of aspiration, of mind, and of habit of work. In the year 1805 he got connected with a speculator who was to play fast and loose with his material interests, and (had he not been protected by unshaken firmness) with his self-respect as well. Mr. Robert Hartley Cromek, a native of Yorkshire, had given over the practice of engraving for the position of a print-jobber and book-maker, and was now about to make his first venture as a publisher. He started schemes of work, enlisted co-operation, vamped up volumes, and pocketed proceeds. Keen as he was, he could be taken in: Allan Cunningham palmed off upon him some of his own spirited ballads as genuine relics of popular song. Commonly, however, the function of Mr. Cromek was not that of being taken in by



others, but rather the converse, and the unworldly-minded Blake was doomed to experience his sharp practice, and to resent it bitterly enough, but not the less helplessly. In 1804 and 1805 Blake had produced a series of designs appropriate to that arid yet in some sense forcible poem, Blair's *Grave*, which in those days enjoyed a reputation not easy for us now to conceive. He had himself intended to engrave and publish these very fine designs; but Cromek, having made his acquaintance, and finding him in extremely narrow circumstances (living, as the Yorkshireman afterwards averred, on half-a-guinea a week for himself and his wife), bought the whole series of twelve for the petty sum of £21. Small, miserably small, as this amount obviously is, it was not much out of character with the prices (one guinea to one guinea and a half) which Blake usually received for drawings or water-colours. So far, therefore, the bargain was an endurable one; but only on the express understanding that the engraving also should be Blake's proper handiwork, and paid for, of course, at an ordinary rate. That there *was* such an express though unwritten understanding does not admit of any real doubt: the prospectus issued by Cromek showed as much, and Blake did in fact engrave one or two of the designs in the first instance. But Cromek did not think Blake's style of engraving so likely to attract the public, and to "pay," as that of some other artists. He therefore, in gross breach of faith and to the destruction of Blake's well-grounded expectations of remunerative employment, transferred the engraving-work to another man, and truly a very competent one, Lewis



Schiavonetti, a pupil of Bartolozzi. Neither question of generosity nor even of simplicity can the slightest excuse be suggested for his high-handed proceeding: the utmost that can be said on Cromek's side is that, as Schiavonetti's engravings were likely to prove more valuable than Blake's, the credit arising from his work would redound partly to the designer, and would thus to some extent indemnify him for his loss of the profit of engraving, and give him a better chance of fair prices for future work. Nor was this the only grievance that was inflicted upon Blake with regard to this work. An offensively insolent letter was addressed to the painter in May 1807, requiring him to pay the moderate sum of £4. 4s., at which Cromek had priced a design for the Dedication of *Queen Charlotte*, (accepted by Queen Charlotte), may be seen in Mr. Gilchrist's book, reprinted from the *Edinburgh Magazine*. In that letter, we may see that Cromek has the grace to admit that the value of his designs for the *Grave* were properly valued at least £63; but this is indeed graceless, considering that he only paid £21, and was thus cozened out of his right of engraving the work. He finally refused so poor a boon as this moderate sum of £4. 4s. The book was published in the autumn of 1808, 589 subscribers having obtained it at £2. 12s. 6d. each: Cromek's share included likewise the money accruing from the sale of the first and extra copies. The well-known portrait of Blake by Phillips was engraved as a frontispiece to the volume, which may too truthfully be termed the only work of his which ever attained to public during his lifetime. At all periods

career he had some admirers, and in his later years a few much younger men might almost be regarded as his proselytes or reverential disciples: in the present instance he once—and once only—secured some moderate instalment of general reputation.

Mr. Cromek's misdemeanours against Blake did not terminate with the affair of the Blair designs. In a second transaction he acted still more foully, if we are to believe Blake's account of the matter; and I cannot see why we should not credit it, although the evidence may be somewhat more indistinct. While Schiavonetti was progressing with his engraving work, Cromek called one day on Blake, and saw a pencil drawing which the latter had made of Chaucer's *Canterbury Pilgrims* on their road; and he gave Blake a commission to execute the design—so at least the painter considered. But Cromek, who had in reality wished, and wished in vain, to obtain a finished drawing of the subject from Blake, to be again engraved by some one else, now threw the artist over altogether. Such a bidding from Cromek was indeed not likely to be entertained; for Blake's friends had already circulated, or about this time did put forward, a prospectus with a view to the engraving of this very work by Blake himself, by subscription. Cromek went off to Stothard, and suggested the same subject to him; an oil-picture to cost £63, and to be engraved. Stothard consented, proceeded with his task, and did not withhold the work, during its progress, from Blake's own inspection; a circumstance which may fortunately be construed as indicating that he was not aware of the fraud upon his friend's right of

inventive priority, to which he had become a party. Flaxman believed that Stothard was not a wilful misdoer in this matter: and that may not improbably have been one principal motive for the outbursts against Flaxman himself which one finds written by Blake in epigrammatic verse and otherwise. He, when he learned the precise state of the facts, blazed forth in indignation. His wrath was rightfully directed against Cromek; rightfully perhaps to some extent—at any rate naturally—against Stothard, his old and familiar acquaintance. This was the great cause, though not strictly the only incidental occasion, of his breach of friendship with Stothard—who also, on his part, assumed the tone of an aggrieved man, suffering under unjust and unhandsome imputations. The breach was never closed. Several years afterwards Blake—generous and placable at heart, though he had openly spoken his mind against his antagonist to all sorts of people—met him at a gathering of artists, and held out his hand for reconciliation; Stothard refused it. He also called to see Stothard when the latter was ill, but admittance was not vouchsafed him.

The sequel of Cromek's commission to Stothard for the *Canterbury Pilgrimage* is well known. The picture—natural, if debility were the natural thing for such a subject, and agreeable if one chooses to condone the emasculation of Chaucer—was completed, and publicly exhibited, in May 1807, to many thousands of visitors; and, after a considerable interval (Cromek having died meanwhile), the engraving made its appearance, and became immensely popular. As regards Blake also this thorny affair had its sequel. Fired by

seeing, at the end of the Blair's *Grave*, a prospectus announcing Stothard's *Canterbury Pilgrimage*, Blake completed his picture (of the class that he termed "fresco") of the same subject, and resolved to exhibit it, along with other pictures and water-colours. The exhibition was opened in May 1809, on the first floor of No. 28 Broad Street, the natal home of Blake, and still the shop of his brother the hosier. He drew up a *Descriptive Catalogue* of the works. This is one of the most singular and entertaining examples of his prose writing, and includes an admirable tribute to the greatness of Chaucer as the classifier and pourtrayer of human character, for his own age and for all ages: in truth, it cannot be said that one knows Blake thoroughly until after perusing the *Descriptive Catalogue*. The admission-fee to the exhibition, including the catalogue, was half-a-crown: the visitors were next to none. Blake then issued a prospectus for engraving his picture of *The Canterbury Pilgrims*, of which Mr. Butts became the possessor, the price to subscribers being £4. 4s. The subscribers proved scanty; but the engraving, begun in the autumn of 1809, was brought out in October 1810, considerably preceding the print from his rival Stothard. The two productions are no less unlike than the two men. Blake's is as unattractive as Stothard's is facile, as hard and strong as Stothard's is limp; one face in Blake's design means as much on the part of the artist, and takes as much scrutiny and turning-over of thought on the part of the spectator, as all the pretty fantoccini and their sprightly little horses in Stothard's work, from first to last. Be this

said without any undervaluing of the numerous and excellent gifts of this charming designer, which make many of his works praiseworthy indeed, and confer no despicable value upon every picture of the *Canterbury Pilgrimage*.

Always unsuccessful with the public and patrons, Blake became still more so after a tussle with Cromek and Stothard. He suffered in mind and temper, not to speak of the people steered clear of him, and with increasing emphasis pronounced him mad. Towards the end of his life, however, he was introduced to a new, and (as it proved) a most true and valuable, friend. This friend gradually, through the latter, to that circle attached and often enthusiastic acquaintance whom he was chiefly conversant in his declining years, and who, had he needed any such aid, might have powerfully contributed to keep him in spirits and hope. The friend here referred to is John Linnell the landscape-painter, who lives among us, and continues to sustain his reputation nobly as any of our masters, after allowing Turner as the one without parallel) the name of our school in this branch of art. To Mr. George Cumberland, of Bristol, who brought Blake and Linnell together. The latter (speaking of full sixty years ago) was then a glowing young man, turning his hand to many kinds of artistic work—principally to portrait-painting. He engraved several of his productions of the highest class; and Blake was associated with him in some of these prints, which the elder artist began, and the junior finished. Through Mr. Linnell, the water-colour painters, John Varley, Richter, and Holmes, became known to I

the latter two had some influence upon him in deepening the scale of colour in his water-colour works. It was with Varley, however, that Blake had the most intercourse. This gentleman, Blake's junior by twenty years, besides being a landscape-painter of uncommon merit, was an adept in astrology: he even received fees for calculating nativities, and some very singular instances are related of the fulfilment of his prognostications. Naturally such a man must have been greatly attracted towards Blake, with his faculty of imaginative vision, and Blake towards him. The Visionary Heads drawn by Blake, of which much has been said by all his few biographers, were executed at Varley's house, and in his presence: Mr. Linnell possesses thirty-six of them, including that unique subject "The Ghost of a Flea." As it is important to understand the mood of mind in which Blake produced these works, and as the condensation of details could hardly be carried beyond what has been done by Mr. Gilchrist, I will here avail myself of that author's words:—

"Varley it was who encouraged Blake to take authentic sketches of certain among his most frequent spiritual visitants. The visionary faculty was so much under control that at the wish of a friend he could summon before his abstracted gaze any of the familiar forms and faces he was asked for. This was during the favourable and besitting hours of night, from nine or ten in the evening until one or two, or perhaps three or four, o'clock in the morning; Varley sitting by, 'sometimes slumbering and sometimes waking.' Varley would say 'Draw me Moses,' or David; or would

call for a likeness of Julius Cæsar, or Cassianus, or Edward the Third, or some other historical personage. Blake would answer 'That he is!' And, paper and pencil being at hand, would begin drawing with the utmost alacrity and composure, looking up from time to time though he had a real sitter before him; ingeniously Varley meanwhile straining wistful eyes into vacancy, and seeing nothing, though he tried hard, and at first expected his faith and patience to be rewarded by a genuine apparition. A 'vision' had a very different signification with Blake than that it had in literal Varley's mind. Sometimes Blake had to wait for the vision's appearance, sometimes it would come at call. At other times, in the midst of his portrait, he would suddenly drop off, and, in his ordinary quiet tones, and with the same matter-of-fact air another might say 'It rains,' would remark, 'I can't go on—it is gone; I must wait till it returns'; or 'It has melted; the mouth is gone'; or 'He frowns—he is displeased with my portrait of him.' . . . In the daylight, criticisms were hazarded by the painter on the character or drawing of these or any other visions. 'Oh it's all right,' Blake would calmly reply. 'It *must* be right: I saw it so.' It did not signify what you said: nothing could put him out; so assured was he that he, or rather his imagination, was right, and that what the vision revealed was implicitly to be relied on,—and without any appearance of conceit or intrusion on his part."

Among the personages whose portraits Blake drew in this mode were the Builder of the Pyramids, Edward the Third as he exists in the spirit

world, a man who instructed Blake in painting, his dreams, David, Uriah, Bathsheba, Solomon, Shalomet, "Joseph and Mary, and the room they were seen in," Old Parr at the age of forty, &c.

In 1821 Blake removed to the house in which it was fated that his life should close—No. 3 Fountain Court, Strand, close now to Simpson's dining-rooms. Here he occupied the first floor; appropriating one of his two apartments as a reception-room, while the other was his living-room for all purposes—working, studying, cooking, dining, sleeping. It has been made a subject of controversy whether Blake's *ménage* was or was not, under these circumstances, a "squalid" one. To some eyes it did appear so: but one of his then youthful and most sincerely attached friends, Mr. Samuel Palmer, so deservedly admired now as a painter and etcher of landscapes full of nature and of poetry, is very emphatic in repudiating the epithet. "It gives," he says, "a notion altogether false of the man, his house, and his habits. Whatever was in Blake's house, there was no squalor. Himself, his wife, and his rooms, were clean and orderly; everything was in its place." We may readily accept this as a candid and true statement of the matter, viewed by a young man free from the habit or the love of luxury, and construing everything that regarded Blake in the light of the love and enthusiasm which so exalted a seer of spiritual things rightly commanded from a youthful aspirant and disciple. This is the truth, if not the *whole* truth—of which some other aspects were visible to eyes of a different kind.

Blake executed in 1820-21 the only woodcuts



that he ever worked upon, seventeen designed by himself in illustration of the *Book of Job*—rough and brilliant, 'prentice v master's work at once. Towards 1822 he p his first set of twenty-two water-colour p from the *Book of Job*: these were about works of his which his old friend Mr. B. chased. Soon afterwards that gentleman the series in the artist's hands, so as to an incentive to any other person who n minded to give him a commission, Blake's n position being at this time very low. Mr. by a written agreement dated 25th March gaged him to paint a duplicate set of the desi to engrave them. He was to receive £10 designs and copyright, and a like sum ou proceeds. No proceeds, however, were fort from the engravings, the sale of which covered the expenses: Mr. Linnell, viev equity of the case in a handsome spirit, p Blake with an extra £50. The engravin *Job* are executed entirely with the graver is no etching. In this respect the ar partly influenced by a more particular s which Mr. Linnell had lately invited him, c engravings of the date of Marcantonio ar soni, to the latter of whom Blake paid heed. The volume of *Job* prints was is

or his immediate purpose, produced nearly a hundred water-colours (one of the largest series he ever executed), and engraved seven of them to boot. The prints came out at the very close of his career—the year 1827, in which he died. For this work also a sum of £150 had been paid by Mr. Linnell by the time of his friend's decease; and paid on such easy and accommodating conditions that the final months of Blake's life must (it is a satisfaction to reflect) have been passed without wearing anxiety as to money-matters—though indeed he was not wont, under any circumstances, to allow such considerations much space in his mind. According to this arrangement, he received two or three pounds a week as he wanted money, without any sort of pressure as to the prompt production of designs or engravings to correspond with the successive payments; and, with the economical habits of himself and his wife, this was amply as much as he found occasion for. Another of the works which occupied him towards this time was his large tempera-picture (large for Blake, for none of his works was really of very considerable size) representing the Last Judgment, and containing, it is said, some thousand figures. This is at any rate the third instance in which he had treated the same overwhelming theme: the work seems to have remained unsold at his death, and its present whereabouts is uncertain.

We have now reached the latest stages in the life of the exalted visionary, and have little more to record save physical suffering and decay. About the first indication that we find of Blake's failing health occurs in a letter addressed to Mr. Linnell on 10th November 1825, in which he says: "I can-

not get well, and am now in bed, but seem as if I should be better to-morrow." Elsewhere we read of "his ankles frightfully swelled, his chest disordered." He continued subject to frequent and painful attacks of cold and dysentery, very generally recurring after any visit paid to Linnell at Hampstead. Such visits, mostly on Sundays, had now become frequent, and were a source of great pleasure, not only to the seniors, but also to the growing family of small Linnells, to whom the aged idealist condescended with paternal fondness. But the Hampstead air was inimical to him: one of his letters (1st February 1826) represents that, even in his youth, he could not go to Hampstead, Highgate, or other northern suburbs of London, without exposing himself to derangements of this kind. Then we hear of "another desperate shivering-fit" (18th May 1826), and "a deathly feel all over the limbs," relieved by going to bed, and consequent perspiration. Another attack came on on the 1st of July 1827, upon his returning home from Hampstead; this was the final one, or at any rate he never rallied from it to much purpose. His physical powers waned without great pain at the last, or any loss of mental capacity. He was frequently bolstered up in bed to go on with the Dante designs: a pencil (one pencil at a time for so great an artist as Blake!) was among his latest purchases. The very last works of his that have been distinctly specified are a coloured example of *The Ancient of Days* and a sketch of his wife. *The Ancient of Days* "when he set a compass upon the face of the earth," one of the figures engraved in the Prophecy of *Europe*, was a favourite design

with Blake. Mr. Tatham had offered three guineas and a half for this particular impression, coloured; and, for so comparatively large a price, Blake bestowed his heartiest labour upon the finishing of the tints. "After he had frequently touched upon it," says Mr. Tatham, "and had frequently held it at a distance, he threw it from him, and with an air of exulting triumph exclaimed, 'There! that will do,—I cannot mend it.'" No sooner had he done this than, addressing his devoted wife, he said: "Stay! keep as you are. You have ever been an angel to me: I will draw you." He accordingly made a drawing, described by Mr. Tatham as "a frenzied sketch, of some power,—highly interesting, but not like."

This may have been some few days prior to the 12th of August 1827, which brought Blake's earthly life to a close. On that day (as related by Mr. J. T. Smith) "he composed and uttered songs to his Maker, so sweetly to the ear of his Catharine that, when she stood to hear him, he, looking upon her most affectionately, said—'My beloved, they are not mine! no, they are *not* mine!' He told her they would not be parted; he should always be about her to take care of her." Another friend relates:—"He said he was going to that country he had all his life wished to see, and expressed himself happy, hoping for salvation through Jesus Christ. Just before he died, his countenance became fair, his eyes brightened, and he burst out into singing of the things he saw in heaven." Then his breath began to fail: and he died towards six in the evening, so calmly that the precise moment of his expiring could hardly be fixed. In a manu-

script account, drawn up by Mr. Tatham, i stated that the cause of death was ascertain be a mixing of the gall with the blood.

Blake was buried in the Bunhill Fields Ce tery ; this had been his own wish, as his fa and other members of the family lay tl already. The grave—an unpurchased com grave—is unmarked by any memorial, and c not now be traced. He incurred during his and at his death he left, no debts; numer unsold specimens of his designs, engravings, engraved books, remained. The sale of these friendly or admiring purchasers here and th helped to sustain in moderate comfort the dec ing days of good Mrs. Blake,<sup>1</sup> who survived husband about four years—his spirit, as she and said, being still with her: she died October 1831. At first she had been residin Mr. Linnell's house in Cirencester Place, pa in fulfilment of an old but then abandoned ject, according to which both she and B would have lived there rent-free in charge of premises, while Linnell and his family d chiefly at Hampstead. Leaving Cirence Place, she had afterwards stayed in Mr. Tatha chambers, under a somewhat similar arran

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<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Blake, so attractive at the time when the pa first saw and loved her, appears to have lost her good l rather early than otherwise. It is said that an acqu ance who met her again after a lapse of seven years “ r saw a woman so much altered.” The date to which anecdote appertains is not defined: the mention of “ s years” inclines me to suppose that it may belong to year 1794 or 1795, and that the “acquaintance” may been one of the Flaxman family,—as Flaxman return 1794 from a seven years' sojourn in Italy.

ment; and finally had taken lodgings of her own, No. 17 Upper Charlotte Street, Fitzroy Square, where her life terminated. Blake's sister, who had been domesticated with him in the old days at Felpham, survived some years longer; but no particulars regarding her latest period of life remain, save the report that she was extremely poor.

Mrs. Blake had bequeathed to one of her most constant friends the remaining stock of her husband's works, and Mr. Gilchrist informs us—"They have since been widely dispersed, some destroyed." Note-books, poems, designs, in lavish quantity, annihilated: a gag (as it were) thrust into the piteous mouth of Blake's corpse. The fact is—so I have been informed—that Swedenborgians, Irvingites, or other extreme sectaries, beset the then youthful custodian of these priceless relics, and persuaded him to make a holocaust of them, as being heretical, and dangerous to those poor dear "unprotected females" Religion and Morals. The horrescent pietists allowed that the works were "inspired;" but alas! the inspiration had come from the Devil. The words inscribed by Blake upon that very early engraving of his, but with a wholly different intention, recur to our memory—"Such were the Christians in all ages."

### 3.—BLAKE'S VISIONS, PERSON, CHARACTER, AND INTELLECT.

Before proceeding to other points bearing upon Blake's character, we may as well say here something about his visions—a matter which we have

as yet left almost entirely aside, nigh tant as it is to the understanding of our

It has been stated that he saw his fi at Peckham Rye, near Dulwich Hill, wh some ten years of age, or less. He then tree filled with angels, their wings of brilliancy amid the boughs. But th have been his *first* vision, if we are to a quaint observation made by Mrs. Bla about 1826) to Mr. Crabb Robinson.

addressing her husband: "You know, first time you saw God was when you years old; and he put his head to the and set you a-screaming." Clearly, quadrennial Blake had seen the prese at a window, there remained for him experience or explore in the way of revealings. On another occasion, wh child, he saw angelic figures walking a haymakers. The next instance is a curio is not properly a vision, but a prevision tion, and no doubt one might easily stress on the slight incident than it i The engraver to whom Blake's father firs of apprenticing him was not Basire, but a man of great distinction at the time, to the king, and familiar with many p the first eminence. Young Blake, how liked the idea of becoming Ryland's a After leaving his house, he said:—"Fal not like the man's face,—it looks as if he to be hanged." And, twelve years af so it proved, the ill-starred Ryland *was* having committed a forgery on the Ea Company. In Westminster Abbey, when

As Basire's apprentice, Blake had a vision of Christ and the Apostles. At a later date he had the habit of speaking which startled many. He would say "I am Socrates," or any one else's name and personality might be in question. It is not so, Isaiah, or other great character. This is sufficiently intelligible if one chooses to refer to Blake's point of view, even without supposing that he was a direct adherent of the doctrine of metempsychosis. To him, mind and body are the eternal substance, and body only the temporary accident, it was open enough to say that his own mind, in so far as it possessed a clear apprehension of Socrates, was identical with Socrates—was in truth Socrates; for Socrates himself had been merely a mind housed for a while in a rather different body. To Mr. Robinson, who first met Blake in December 1795, he said: "I was Socrates or a sort of Socrates: I must have had conversations with him. I had with Jesus Christ: I have an obscure recollection of having been with both of them." Mr. Robinson, in fact, had a face somewhat, in his old age, resembling that of Socrates, and this at least was made a subject of remark; but he was really a much better-looking man than that far from well-known philosopher. When living in Hercules Buildings, he had a vision, not clearly defined to him, which hovered over his head at the top of the staircase, and inspired him with the grand figure of the *Ancient of Days*, already referred to: it made a more powerful impression on his mind than any preceding vision. On the same staircase he saw a ghost: the only one that he ever did see, and in such apparitions, he would sometimes say,



did not often visit imaginative men. It was "a horrible grim figure, scaly, speckled, very awful, stalking down-stairs," and so frightened our painter that he ran out of the house. At Felpham he held converse with many spirits of a less repellent kind—Moses and the Prophets, Homer, Dante, Milton: he described them as "all majestic shadows, grey but luminous, and superior to the common height of men." Milton appears to have been a frequent visitant in later years as well. On one occasion, "I tried," said Blake, "to convince him he was wrong, but I could not succeed. His tastes are Pagan: his house is Palladian, not Gothic." At another time he affirmed: "I have seen him as a youth, and as an old man with long flowing beard. He came lately as an old man. He came to ask a favour of me; said he had committed an error in *Paradise Lost*, which he wanted me to correct in poem or picture. But I declined; I said I had my own duties to perform." The error in question was "that carnal pleasures arose from the Fall: the Fall" (added Blake) "could not produce any pleasure." With Voltaire also Blake averred that he had had "much intercourse," and that the French philosopher had been commissioned by God to bring into discredit the natural sense of the Bible, of which, however, Blake accepted and championed the spiritual sense. At Felpham, again, in his garden, he saw "a fairy's funeral," of which Allan Cunningham gives a little account as if in Blake's own spoken words, but how far strictly authentic one may feel some doubt. It was "a procession of creatures of the size and colour of green and grey grasshoppers, bearing a bod

laid out on a rose-leaf, which they buried with songs, and then disappeared." In this statement there may have been at least as much of fanciful invention as of mere acquiescence in popular superstition. A more decisively superstitious tone of mind appears in Blake's assertion that some foul spell of Stothard's had caused the almost total effacing of the original pencil drawing of the *Canterbury Pilgrims*, which Blake (after he had shown it to Cromek, with the unpleasant sequel already related) had hung up over a door in his sitting-room, leaving it there, exposed to air and dust, for about a year. There is another story of an account given by Blake of a meadow in which he saw a fold of lambs, which turned out to be sculptured, not living, animals. In itself, the statement has no importance, and little apparent meaning of any kind: it is, however, of some interest in connection with the reply which Blake gave to a lady who asked him *where* he had descried this sight. "Here, madam," he replied, touching his forehead: an answer which serves to caution us against supposing that he either accepted as literal facts for himself, or wished to convey literally to others, some of the visionary or supersensuous incidents of which he made frequent mention. Here is another of them, more than commonly amusing in point of expression, as narrated by Blake to Mr. Crabb Robinson. "You never saw the spiritual sun? I have. I saw him on Primrose Hill. He said: 'Do you take me for the Greek Apollo? No! *That*' (pointing to the sky) 'that is the Greek Apollo: he is Satan!'"

That Blake believed in the *truth* of his visions is abundantly evident: whether he also believed

in their actual objective *reality* is a different question. I should, however, be minded to answer in the affirmative, in many instances; but should always be recollected that the terms applicable to bodily realities, according to which we speak of them as present *de facto* and having a physical subsistence, are not properly or fully relevant to mental or spiritual realities. A few of Blake's own words (from the *Descriptive Catalogue*) may be very fittingly introduced here. "The Prophets describe what they saw in vision as real existing men, whom they saw with their imaginative and immortal organs; the Apostles the same. The clearer the organ, the more distinct the object. A spirit and a vision are not, as the modern philosophy supposes, a cloudy vapour or a nothing; they are organized and minutely articulated beyond all that the mortal and perishing nature can produce. He who does not imagine in stronger and better lineaments, and in stronger and better light, than his perishing mortal eye can see, does not imagine at all. The painter in this work asserts that all his imaginations appear to him infinitely more perfect and more minutely organized than anything seen by his mortal eye. Spirits are organized men." Blake had a mental intuition, inspiration, or revelation,—call it what we will; it was as real to his spiritual eye as a material object could be to his bodily eye and no doubt his bodily eye, the eye of the designer and painter with a great gift of invention and composition, was far more than normally ready at following the dictate of the spiritual eye, and seeing, with an almost instantaneous and unconsciously creative and fashioning act, the vision

semblance of the visionary essence. Blake thus, in a certain not solely metaphorical sense, veritably *saw* the vision; and, with his imperious, emphatic, and uncompromising mode of speech, he would naturally speak of it as real, without any of those saving clauses, or qualifying concessions to his hearer, which another man would have introduced. But in fact I have understated it in saying that the mental intuition "was *as* real to his spiritual eye as a material object could be to his bodily eye." It was much *more* real. To Blake in very deed, as to how many others in theory or in professed belief, the spiritual was the reality, and the physical was the phantasm—a fleeting and unsubstantial illusion, connate and coetaneous with the bodily five senses. *These* were, for Blake, the untrue reporters about ambiguous simulacra; while the mind was a true criterion and recorder of truths, and the self-evidence of their verity. That he had held converse with Milton—his mind with Milton's mind, his perceptive faculty with Milton's perceptibility—this was a mental truth, therefore, in the full sense of the word, a *truth*. On the other hand, that he held converse with Mr. Crabb Robinson concerning Milton, that his vocal organs uttered sounds of which Mr. Robinson's auditory sense took cognizance, and that his bodily eyes saw the external frame of Mr. Robinson,—that was but a sensory exercise or impression, an evanescent accident, phænomenal not essential.

This is, I think, the intrinsic truth about Blake's visions, although it is difficult to express the exact degree in which, according to his personal impressions and convictions at least, the

appearances presented themselves to him spontaneously and unbidden, apart from any self-conscious exercise of imagination or formative power. In such a case, the more active the man himself is, and the more prolific his imagination has been in producing the visions, so likewise the more passive does he become: the visions are invested, out of his own vital force, with a vitality proper to themselves, and dominate their originator. They had been his objects: he is now their subject. Blake conceived a vision: in conceiving it, he saw it: inasmuch as he saw it, he believed in it: and, believing in it, he spoke of it in terms which affirmed—and necessarily so, according to his intellectual creed—its real existence. Had he been a different man, all these stages of the affair would also have been different; but, such as he was, he expressed himself simply and truthfully. It might be noted moreover that his general mode of life, and especially the abstemious habits to which poverty as well as inclination conduced, were peculiarly likely to foster the visionary tendency, and to convert cogitations into perceptions.

In person Blake was below the middle height, his stature being hardly five feet and a half. He was of robust though rather slender make, and fearless spirit: one instance of which we have already seen in the very summary treatment which he applied to the soldier who had entered his garden, and who, in revenge, accused him of seditious speech. Another instance was an onslaught of uttermost energy and instantaneous success which he committed on some rascal who was battering his wife in the St. Giles district. His dress was simple, and one may well suppose



that it was mostly rather shabby than otherwise, though there was nothing in it to attract particular notice out of doors : Mr. Palmer, referring to the year 1823 or 1824, speaks of " Blake in his plain black suit, and rather broad-brimmed but not quakerish hat ; " he continued wearing knee-breeches to the last. The same friend says :— " His eye was the finest I ever saw ; brilliant but not roving, clear and intent yet susceptible : it flashed with genius, or melted in tenderness. It could also be terrible ; cunning and falsehood quailed under it. Nor was the mouth less expressive,—the lips flexible, and quivering with feeling." He was short-sighted, and his eyes were prominent, as usual in such cases ; but he wore glasses only occasionally. The head was massive, the brow full and rounded ; it might have been deemed to surge and heave with what was within. The nose has been termed " insignificant as to size ; " but I cannot say that this appears to me to be shown either by the portrait which Phillips painted, or by the sketch done by Blake himself which may be seen in Mr. Gilchrist's book. In the latter likeness especially the nose is of ample size, as are all the other features proportionately—the mouth being the least full. Mr. Robinson has spoken of " the sweetness of his countenance, and gentility of his manner," which, as he says, " added an indescribable grace to his conversation." Wholly destitute as he was of " dignified reserve," he has been called " the politest of men,"—equally courteous to people of every age and rank ; and, with all his intensity of spirit and heat of temperament, there were on ordinary occasions " great meekness and retirement of manner, such as belong to the true gentleman, and commanded

respect." Blake has himself referred to a letter written shortly before he quitted F and has noticed it as working to his de there: "It is certain that a too passive : inconsistent with my active physiognoi done me great mischief."

The character of Blake is sufficiently di in the events of his life, and a few ad observations will be enough. He was en single-minded, energetic, impulsive, ve without reticence and without indir Every one might know what he thought, meant, what he wanted, and what he pu He was also incessantly and indefatigab rious, patiently toiling on, never taking a turning only from one occupation to anot relief. Often he would write away at a brief intervals, almost without discontinu spell of engraving; but occasionally, it seem, he pursued his own individual v poetry or in designing, to the neglect of ot more paying work which may have been o his ordinary task as an engraver of all miscellaneous subject-matter. In such c wife, finding it vain to remonstrate from day, would at last, when all the house-mo gone, set before him an empty plate: he wo the hint, turn to at some drudgery, and the hard earning of his pittance. Marlies reference to waning resources had perha elicited the response, "Oh damn the mone always the money!" "He was an early rise Mr. Gilchrist, "and worked steadily on i health and sickness. Once a young artis and complained of being very ill,—What

to do? 'Oh!' said Blake, 'I never stop for anything: I work on, whether ill or not.' He never took walks for mere walking's sake, or for pleasure, and could not sympathize with those who did." Another writer, Mr. J. T. Smith, states: "Often in the middle of the night, he would, after thinking deeply upon a particular subject, leap from his bed, and write for two hours or more." His habits were extremely temperate. Money he despised, and fame—the applause of contemporaries or of posterity—he was ready to do without: at the same time, he was by no means indifferent to the claims which he possessed on public regard, and he felt both irritated and indignant at the coldness and apathy with which his works were received, and was always ready to express these grievances as bluntly as he felt them acutely. It may be inferred that—true in this as in other matters to the impressionable artistic temperament—he was too liable to take umbrage and conceive dislikes. This tendency would doubtless have been fostered by his wife, of whom it has been said that "some of the characteristics of an originally uneducated mind had clung to her, despite the late culture received from her husband; an exaggerated suspiciousness, for instance, and even jealousy, of his friends." Thus Blake, open-minded and frank with friend and acquaintance, was also subject to fits of estrangement, which found a splenetic utterance orally and in writing. Nor yet was this waywardness or touchiness the only thing that made him not easy to be approached by most men, or to be kept up with even by the few who approached: by his very birthright, he belonged to the race of the solitary and unaccompanied.



'Blake,' it has been well said,<sup>1</sup> "had a difficult and repulsive [repellent] phase in his character. It seems a pity that men so amiable and tender, so attractive to one's desire for fellowship, should prove on close contact to have a side of their nature so adamant and full of self-assertion and resistance that they are driven at last to dwell in the small circle of friends who have the forbearance to excuse their peculiarities, and the wit to interpret their moods and minds.

'Nor is it possible to thought  
A greater than itself to know.'

In this sphinx-like and musical couplet, Blake himself hits the true basis of the reason why men whose genius is at once so sweet, so strong, and so unusual, are largely overlooked during life, and are difficult of exposition when the fluctuations and caprices of life no longer interfere to prevent a fair estimate of their powers and performances." Here and there, however, some stranger capable of appreciating Blake happened to encounter him: the German painter Götzenberger should be especially named. He has left it on record: "I saw in England many men of talent, but only three men of genius,—Coleridge, Flaxman, and Blake; and of these Blake was the greatest."

Let us add (or rather repeat, for we have before had occasion to state the fact, and exem-

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<sup>1</sup> In an article, *Life of William Blake*, published in the *London Quarterly Review* for January 1869, by way of reviewing Mr. Gilchrist's book. This article, the best of all those I have seen having the same object, was written by Mr. James Smetham,—who, being himself a painter and designer, has more than common qualifications for appreciating Blake, and bringing the reader *en rapport* with him.

plify it by an instance) that, notwithstanding his jealous suspicions and summary aggressiveness, Blake was neither rancorous nor unforgiving. "He seemed incapable of envy" (says Mr. Crabb Robinson), "as he was of discontent." His heart was truly a soft one; and his liberality, considering his extremely restricted means, was more than laudable. On one occasion he lent £40 (almost all the money that he then possessed, and presumably far more than he could mostly command for any purpose whatever) to an acquaintance who was in difficulty. At another time his attention was caught by a young man, evidently in delicate health, who frequently passed his house. He invited the youth indoors; found him to be a student of art; and, seconded by Mrs. Blake, ministered to his wants for some while together with unwearying kindness.

His unworldliness, extreme as it was, did not degenerate into ineptitude: he apprehended the requirements of practical life, was prepared to meet them in a resolute and diligent spirit from day to day, and could on occasion display a full share of sagacity. He was of lofty and independent spirit, not caring to refute any odd stories that were current regarding his conduct or demeanour, neither parading nor concealing his poverty, and seldom accepting any sort of aid for which he could not and did not supply a full equivalent. His conversation was nervous and brilliant, his knowledge various and extensive. This is Mr. Palmer's testimony, and we may probably accept it in the sense in which it is meant; though in the way of accurate scholarship, of precise acquisition of the details of knowledge,

Blake, like many other men of great intelligence had little to vaunt. The same observant and sympathetic friend tells us that, notwithstanding the wild, yet never meaningless, attacks which Blake has written on certain artists (such as Titian, Correggio, Rubens, Reynolds), "in conversation he was anything but sectarian or exclusive, finding sources of delight through the whole range of art, while, as a critic, he was judicious and discriminating." In reversing, it should be understood that so much of his extremest and fiercest utterances was due to a spirit of opposition rather than to anything else: people provoked him by obtuseness or antagonism, and he would make them steady by the opinions he expressed or the affirmations he made. His voice was low and musical. He was gentle and affectionate, loving to be with little children, and to talk about them. Republican and liberty-loving as he was, he had little faith in common demagogues, and entertained certain curious likings for ecclesiastical governments, thinking less ill of priestcraft than "soldiercraft and lawyercraft." That he was the whole and in the best sense happy is, considering all his trials and crosses, one of the very highest evidences in his praise. "If I ask," writes Mr. Palmer, "whether I ever knew among the intellectual a happy man, Blake would be only one who would immediately occur to me. Visionary and ideal aspiration of the intensest kind; the imaginative life wholly predominant over the corporeal and mundane life, and almost swallowing it up; and a child-like simplicity of personal character, free from self-interest, &

ignorant or careless of any policy of self-control, though habitually guided and regulated by noble emotions and a resolute loyalty to duty—these are the main lines which we trace throughout the entire career of Blake, in his life and death, in his writings and his art. This it is which makes him so peculiarly loveable and admirable as a man, and invests his works, especially his poems, with so delightful a charm. We feel that he is truly of "the kingdom of heaven": above the firmament, his soul holds converse with archangels; on the earth, he is as the little child whom Jesus "set in the midst of them."

It must be allowed that in many instances Blake spoke of himself with measureless and rather provoking self-applause. This is in truth one conspicuous outcome of that very simplicity of character of which I have just spoken: egotism it is, but not worldly self-seeking. Something also is probably due to the fact that he considered himself to be continually working under direct inspiration or supernatural command; and much assuredly, to his canons of art, according to which the conception or invention of a work was the one thing of supreme importance, and the power of execution indivisibly annexed to the power of invention. If only the idea was strikingly and movingly expressed, that was the execution of the work, adequately carried out, and finally right. Here are a few examples of the style in which Blake was capable of writing about himself. "It has been said to the artist—'Take the Apollo for the model of your Beautiful Man,'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Our extract is from Blake's *Descriptive Catalogue*, and relates especially to the painting entitled—*The Ancient*

and the Hercules for your Strong Man, the Dancing Faun for your Ugly Man. he comes to his trial. He knows that he does is not inferior to the grandest antic Superior it cannot be, for human power can go beyond either what he does or what they done. It is the gift of God, it is inspiration vision." "I have now given two years to intense study of those parts of the art which relate to light-and-shade and colour; and convinced that either my understanding is incapable of comprehending the beauty of colour or the pictures which I painted for you<sup>1</sup> equal in every part of the art, and superior one, to anything that has been done since the age of Raphael . . . I also know and understand, and can assuredly affirm, that the work I have done for you are equal to the Caracci or Raphael (and I am now some years older than Raphael was when he died). I say they are equal to Caracci<sup>2</sup> or Raphael; or else I am blind, stupid, ignorant, and incapable, in

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*Britons. In the last Battle of King Arthur only Britons escaped. These were the Strongest Man, the Bravest Man, and the Ugliest Man. These three marched through the field unsubdued as Gods, and the sun of Britain set, but shall arise again with tenfold splendour when Achan shall awake from sleep, and resume his dominion over the land and ocean.*

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Butts. This extract comes from a private letter addressed to that gentleman in 1802.

<sup>2</sup> Of course many of us at the present day will think Blake's works are more than equal (in various respects including some of the highest) to those of the Caracci whom, indeed, Blake himself did not greatly revere though he here couples their name with Raphael's. It was probably an *argumentum ad hominem*.

years' study, to understand those things which a boarding-school miss can comprehend in a fortnight. Be assured, my dear friend, that there is not one touch in those drawings and pictures but what came from my hand and my heart in unison; that I am proud of being their author, and grateful to you my employer . . . I do not pretend to be perfect: yet, if my works have faults, Caracci's, Correggio's, and Raphael's have faults also." "In the art of painting these impostors sedulously propagate an opinion that great inventors cannot execute . . . I do not believe that this absurd opinion ever was set on foot till, in my outset into life, it was artfully published, both in whispers and in print, by certain persons whose robberies from me made it necessary to them that I should be hid in a corner . . . I, in my own defence, challenge a competition with the finest engravings, and defy the most critical judge to make the comparison honestly; asserting in my own defence that this print<sup>1</sup> is the finest that has been done, or is likely to be done, in England, where drawing, the foundation, is condemned, and absurd nonsense about dots and lozenges and clean strokes made to occupy the attention, to the neglect of all real art." "Mr. Blake's powers of invention very early engaged the attention of many persons of eminence and fortune; by whose means he has been regularly enabled to bring before the public works (he is not afraid to say) of equal magnitude and consequence with the productions of any age or country."

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<sup>1</sup> Blake's print of the *Canterbury Pilgrims*.

found boundless space for exercise, and pierced the utmost depths of it unflinchingly.

As to his religious belief, it should be understood that Blake was a christian in a certain way, and a truly fervent christian: but it was a way of his own, exceedingly different from that of any of the churches. For the last forty years of his life he never entered a place of worship. That he kept up a practice of private prayer—at any rate, on particular emergencies—appears from the following anecdote. Mr. Richmond (the now well-known portrait-painter, then one of the young men who revered Blake in his advanced age), “finding his invention flag during a whole fortnight, went to Blake, as was his wont, for some advice or comfort. He found him sitting at tea with his wife. He related his distress, how he felt deserted by the power of invention. To his astonishment, Blake turned to his wife suddenly, and said: ‘It is just so with us (is it not?) for weeks together, when the visions forsake us. What do we do then, Kate?’ ‘We kneel down and pray, Mr. Blake.’” He was (as Mr. Swinburne has well pointed out) a heretic, not an infidel. He would zealously and vigorously confute the freethinkers, such as Paine and Godwin, whom he met at the table of the bookseller Mr. Johnson; and would constantly, in later years, uphold revelation and christianity, and argue in a very incensed tone against materialism. But, if his companion were a christian of any ordinary type, he would regard Blake himself as the freethinker and unbeliever, cut off by impassable lines of demarcation from the communion of the faithful. Clearly, Blake’s beliefs were not vague to himself, but most express and



positive: yet they appear to have been to a certain extent shifting, or at least subject to great variety of relative weight and of application. Moreover (I again recur to Mr. Swinburne) "it must be remembered that Blake uses the current terms of religion, now as types of his own peculiar faith, now in the sense of ordinary preachers; impugning therefore at one time what at another he will seem to vindicate." Thus the task of setting forth Blake's beliefs becomes arduous, and sometimes hardly to be managed. He believed—with a great profundity and ardour of faith—in God; but he believed also that men are gods, or that collective man is God. He believed in Christ; but exactly what he believed him to be is a separate question. Jesus Christ (he said, conversing with Mr. Robinson) "is the only God; and so am I, and so are you." This, from a certain point of view, is fairly intelligible; other remarks which Blake made on the same occasion, if less important, are also more obscure. "He had just before" (as Mr. Robinson relates) "been speaking of the 'errors' of Jesus Christ: Jesus Christ should not have allowed himself to be crucified, and should not have attacked the government. On my enquiring how this view could be reconciled with the sanctity and divine qualities of Jesus, Blake said 'He was not then become the Father.'" "All nations," he averred, "had originally one language and one religion; this was the religion of Jesus, the everlasting gospel." But what did this gospel amount to? "I know of no other christianity and no other gospel than the liberty both of body and mind to exercise the divine arts of imagination." These



two passages come respectively from the *Descriptive Catalogue* and the *Jerusalem*: widely sundered though they are, they have a real interdependence. Again, he would say "Christianity is Art," and "Art is Christianity."

These oracles about "imagination" and "art," as identified with "christianity," seem to be rather wild; yet there is a certain pregnancy about Blake's words in general which renders it unbecoming that we should pass over the present *dicta* without making some small attempt to understand them. Nevertheless, it is certain that, as Blake did not reach his conclusions by any cautious steps of induction or deduction, we, in using those methods, shall not succeed in precisely solving his problems. But to put the point argumentatively: the prominent idea in Blake's mind may, for instance, have been that Christ rejected "the world," and that his doctrine made light of "the natural man." By a rapid transition from the acceptation which these and other like phrases have received in theology, and in the order of moral ideas, to the construction which might be put upon them in a cosmical sense, Blake may have chosen to think that Christ rejected the visible physical world, and made light of the physical constitution of man—the very things that Blake himself was so perpetually resisting, whenever their claims came into collision with those of supersensual existence and imaginative verity. And in this sense it may have been true to his own intellect—and even not entirely untrue or fantastic to other intellects as well—that christianity champions "the divine arts of imagination," which by Blake were summed up in the single emphatic word

Art." The reader, if disposed to do so, must follow out for himself these and other lines of thought which converge, or may be supposed to converge, towards our poet's laconic and startling axiom.

In immortality Blake seems to have believed implicitly, and (in some main essentials) without much deviation from other people's credence. When he heard of Flaxman's death (7 December 1826), he observed, "I cannot think of death as more than the going out of one room into another." In one of his writings he says: "The world of imagination is the world of eternity. It is the divine bosom into which we shall all go after the death of the vegetated body. This world of imagination is infinite and eternal; whereas the world of generation, or vegetation, is finite and temporal. There exist in that eternal world the permanent realities of everything which we see reflected in this vegetable glass of nature." It may well be doubted, however, whether Blake adhered to the established belief in future rewards and punishments according to the tenour of life which men have led on this earth; and he steadily resisted the acceptance of the common "moral virtues" as the standard of human excellence. What he attended to was difference of character, excellence or meanness of faculty; not what is regarded as the right or the wrong in conduct. Endless capacity for forgiving, and measureless exercise of that capacity, this was his acme—almost his sum-total—of teachable moral or religious obligation, continually repeated, whether in the form of direct precept or otherwise.

" Mutual forgiveness of each vice,  
Such are the Gates of Paradise."

He once maintained that the Roman-Catholic Church is the only one which teaches the forgiveness of sins: this, and not this alone, may have prompted the liking which he certainly entertained for that communion. As to the "moral virtues," he was not afraid of declaring that they "do not exist: they are allegories and dissimulations." Here is another of his curious utterances bearing on that general subject: it occurs in a conversation held with Mr. Robinson in 1825. "There is no use in education: I hold it to be wrong. It is the great sin: it is eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This was the fault of Plato: he knew of nothing but the virtues and vices, and good and evil. There is nothing in all that. Everything is good in God's eyes." At another interview a short while afterwards, Blake, as Mr. Robinson notes, "would allow of no other education than what lies in the cultivation of the fine arts and the imagination."

Blake had in all probability read in his youth some of the mystical or cabalistic writers—Paracelsus, Jacob Böhme, Cornelius Agrippa; and there is a good deal in his speculations, in substance and tone, and sometimes in detail, which can be traced back to authors of this class. Not that he borrowed intentionally, or was at all in the way of following out anybody's system as such: but some of these ideas commended themselves to his mind, and, transfused through that, found expression along with others for which he was probably indebted to no precursor. Swedenborg also he had read, and he respected him, but with measure. "Any man of mechanical talents"

he writes in the *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* "may, from the writings of Paracelsus or Jacob Böhme, produce ten-thousand volumes of equal value with Swedenborg's; and, from those of Dante or Shakspeare, an infinite number."<sup>1</sup> Several of his leading doctrines closely resemble those which were promulgated by Marcion, the celebrated heretic of the second century: Blake might without great impropriety be numbered among those long-extinct sectaries the Marcionites. Marcion held that there was an irreconcilable opposition between the Creator of the world and the Christian God, and their respective systems, the Law and the Gospel. He believed in two, or perhaps three, original principles. One he named the Good; another, the visible God, the Creator; the third was the Devil, or perhaps Matter, the source of evil. Theodoret says that even four such principles were recognized; the one which we have placed third being in this arrangement divided into (3) Matter, and (4) the Devil, the ruler of Matter. Marcion could not discern in Nature, nor yet in the Old Testament, that love which is manifested in the Gospel. He regarded the Creator, the God of the Old Testament, as "*malorum factorem*," or author of suffering. Jesus

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<sup>1</sup> It would be interesting (at any rate to the few readers of Blake's mystical writings) if some thoroughly competent writer, supplementing the masterly performance of Mr. Swinburne, would trace out the relation between the speculations of Blake and those of other mystics. I believe that M. Jules Andrieu, now among us in London, one of the most deserving of honour among the survivors of the much-maligned Parisian Commune, possesses, in almost unequalled degree, the knowledge requisite for such an undertaking—not manageable at all save by a few.

was not the Messiah promised by this (the Jews, but was the son of the unseen and named God, and had appeared on earth as possibly only phantasmal, to deliver souls overthrow the dominion of the Creator. delivered from hades, not the saints (such as and David), but the opponents of the (such as Cain, Esau, Dathan, Abiram, &c.). Marcion condemned marriage, as subsidiary to the propagation of new souls the Creator; he denied the resurrection body; fasted on the sabbath, as an act of ] against the repose of the Creator on the ] and rejected the whole of the Old Testament and much of the New, especially those passages Christ speaks of the Creator as his father. student of Blake's writings will find in these things strictly conformable to these doctrines of Marcion, and other points nearly enou- lated to the same order of ideas.

To illustrate the extreme divergence of ] way of speaking of certain points in ch theology from what is customary with the dox, I give the following brief extract fro *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. It may be r supplementary to the axiom "Art is Christi: "Then Ezekiel said: 'The philosophy of th taught the first principles of human perc Some nations hold one principle for the and some another. We of Israel taught th Poetic Genius (as you now call it) was the Principle, and all the others merely deriv which was the cause of our despising the ] and philosophers of other countries, and p saying that all gods would at last be pro

nate in ours, and to be the tributaries of the  
c Genius. It was this that our great poet  
; David desired so fervently, and invoked so  
etically, saying—By this he conquers enemies,  
governs kingdoms. And we so loved our God  
we cursed in his name all the deities of sur-  
ding nations, and asserted that they had  
lled. From these opinions, the vulgar came  
hink that all nations would at last be subject  
he Jews. This, said he, 'like all firm per-  
sions, is come to pass; for all nations believe  
Jews' code, and worship the Jews' God, and  
t greater subjection can be?' I heard this"  
ake subjoins) "with some wonder, and must  
less my own conviction."

One of the matters most observable, and at  
es most puzzling, in Blake, is the contempt  
h which he treats the body and all its acts, as  
trasted with the spirit and its functions,—  
, on the other hand, the unflagging zeal with  
ch he upholds the acting-out of natural human  
res, and repels and denounces all the coercive  
ces of the formalist, and even the regulative  
ctions between right and wrong propounded  
he moralist. Yet there is a clue to these  
ing contradictions. (Blake believed in man  
divine emanation, an eternally subsisting  
ation of deity.) Man was essentially a spirit;  
in this mundane transit, invested with a  
, and communicating with the infinite  
ugh the medium of the five senses. Man,  
free divine spirit, was at liberty to do, and  
t in doing, whatsoever his spiritual essence  
sted—he was a law to himself, and none  
r law existed; and, in the mundane con-

dition, the body, as organ and vehicle of the spirit, was rightly employed in putting into effect the spiritual desires and aspirations, which, in this physical world, became necessarily conversant in many respects with physical things. Where Blake contemned the body was in its severance from or substitution for the spirit. To trust the five senses, to believe in their intimations as final, or as corrective of the intuitions of the spirit, this was his abhorrence. The spirit had other and superior knowledge than any which the five senses could minister; but the service of the senses, as service and not guidance to the spirit, as executors and not dictators of the free-will, was wholly legitimate and commendable in this transitional and hebetated state of life, since no better might be. "Act out all your spiritual desires, whether the spirit or the body be the appointed medium of action." "Be not careful of the things of the body, rather hold them in small account, and let not the body overrule the spirit." These are two separate precepts (given here not in Blake's own language, but by way of condensing many scattered items of his teaching): separate, but not in the least degree incompatible when one considers them singly and relatively. Blake preached forth both, and both with great emphasis, liable sometimes to mislead his auditor.

Despising sense whenever its evidence or its claims are made to conflict with those of spirit, Blake constantly fell foul of Newton and Locke, authors of "a philosophy of the five senses"; men who could not be contented with perception and conviction, but must investigate, forsooth, and



ponderate, and verify, and find out. Hence too, in part, his still greater and more rabid animosity against Lord Bacon. "The great Bacon, as he is called (I call him the little Bacon), says that everything must be done by experiment." That was one great offence; another was the tone of diplomacy and statecraft (things peculiarly odious to Blake) apparent in the politician's *Essays* and other writings. "Bacon, Locke, and Newton," said Blake to Mr. Robinson, "are the three great teachers of atheism, or Satan's doctrine." Nor did the authors of classical antiquity, taken in a body, fare better at the hands of our mystic; their delight in war, and no doubt their worship of the powers of Nature, being damnatory charges against them. "The stolen and perverted writings" (thus runs a passage from the preface to the poem *Milton*) "of Homer and Ovid, of Plato and Cicero, which all men ought to condemn, are set up by artifice against the sublime of the Bible. But, when the new age is at leisure to pronounce, all will be set right, and those grand works of the more ancient and more consciously and professedly inspired men will hold their proper rank, and the Daughters of Memory [the Muses] shall become the Daughters of Inspiration. Shakspeare and Milton were both curbed by the general malady and infection from the silly Greek and Latin slaves of the sword. . . . We do not want either Greek or Roman models, if we are but just and true to our own imaginations—those worlds of eternity in which we shall live for ever, in Jesus our Lord."

Blake may be termed a pantheist, as well as a mystic. In the essence and elements of the



human soul, its aboriginal powers and passions he recognized no evil: at least, this appears to have been his enduring doctrine when he discovered and formulated it, for no doubt he, like other audacious and impulsive thinkers, said things from time to time which could not be squared exactly with the ideas which he set down with decisive solemnity *ex cathedra*. "Without contraries is no progression. Attraction and repulsion, reason and energy, love and hate are necessary to human existence. From these contraries spring what the religious call good and evil. Good is the passive that obeys reason; evil is the active springing from energy. Good is Heaven; evil is Hell." This extract comes from *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, which it is thus perceived to imply intrinsically "the union of reason with energy;" and we need not explain that Blake was not the sort of man to consider that reason was the only thing noble and noble, to the exclusion of energy. What he calls the one "good," and the other "evil," are to understand both these terms in a plastic and fluent sense, by no means the same as they are given to them in a tract of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. The strenuous exertion of human faculty, of whatever kind, is not hateful to Blake, although he may have identified it, in a certain deep and enlarged sense, with "evil." What he did intensely and thoroughly hate, with an active detestation difficult of apprehension to most people, was the formalism, moral and religious precisians; the dividings, ticketing of the human-divine being, consisting of soul and body; the labelling of one port

him, or one direction of his spiritual energies, as right, and another as wrong; the elaboration of rules, and exact, rigid, self-applausive adherence to them; the whole stock-in-trade of the professed moralist, and *apparatus criticus* of the pharisee. The character in which he abhors and renounces Satan is that of "the Accuser of Sins." The monarch of hell might be the antagonist of many things accounted sacred, and might exercise wild volcanic forces in many inconvenient directions, and yet incur small blame from Blake: but it is a different matter when the same personage accuses others of sins. He has no business to consider that such and such things are sins, or to run up bills of indictment against people who are fulfilling their own destinies, or putting their own free-will into act, or suiting their own tastes. There lies the fatal flaw in Satan. "Every religion that preaches vengeance for sin is the religion of the enemy and avenger, and not of the forgiver of sin; and their God is Satan named by the divine name."

We have now gone through the incidents in the life of Blake, and have taken some general view of his person, his character, and, however imperfect, of his mind and line of thought. We have found him to be spiritual-minded, mystic and visionary, lofty, energetic, hard-working, and superior to circumstance. We shall next recur to a question which we asked almost at the threshold of our investigation—Was he mad?

The first thing to be observed upon this query is that it cannot be answered, to the enquirer's personal satisfaction, unless he has first familiarized himself with Blake's actual work in fine

art and in letters, more especially with the so-called Prophetic Books. If he has done this, he is certain to have formed some opinion on the question, or at any rate to tend towards one opinion or the other; and he will not be easily moved therefrom by the conclusion of other enquirers. For my own part—with the deepest reverence for Blake, the keenest enjoyment of a great deal of his work, and an inclination to accept the rest of it as in some way or other justifiable to the author's intellect, and responsive to, and representative of, his large conceptions and deep meanings—I must nevertheless avow that I think there was something in his mind not exactly sane.<sup>1</sup> I apprehend that there are in the Prophetic Books many passages which show the author to have been possessed by ideas which he could not regulate or control—indeed, he himself proclaimed as much when he asserted that he wrote under immediate dictation, and without the exercise of any option of his own; and, what is far more symptomatic in the same direction, I think he every now and then “boiled over” (if the expression may be allowed) into words which have no definable relevancy to anything that deserves to be called a thought or idea. I cannot pretend to furnish—what has baffled many persons incomparably more qualified than myself for such a task—a fair definition of the term “Madness;” but, when I find a man pouring

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<sup>1</sup> Mr. Smetham expresses himself very much to the same effect. “We cannot but, on the whole, lean to the opinion that somewhere in the wonderful compound of flesh and spirit—somewhere in those recesses where the one runs into the other—he was ‘slightly touched.’”

orth conceptions and images for which he professes himself not responsible, and which are in themselves in the highest degree remote, nebulous, and intangible, and putting some of these moreover into words wherein congruent sequence, and significance of expression or of analogy, are not to be traced, then I cannot resist a strong presumption that that man was in some true sense of the word mad.

To call Blake simply a madman would be ridiculous and despicable; even to call him (as some have done) an inspired madman would be most incomplete and misleading. But it may, I think, be allowable to say that he was a sublime genius, often perfectly sane, often visionary and *exalté*, without precisely losing his hold upon sanity, and sometimes exhibiting an insane taint. To me this appears to be the true statement of the matter; nor do I think it derogates from a respectful and grateful acceptance of Blake's work. We have his product before us, and are constrained to form some estimate of it. There are portions of it which not one of us can possibly hoodwink himself into receiving as the right sort of thing—we *must* condemn them as faulty and even heinous, according to any true standard of art. If we eliminate them as coming from the mad chink of Blake's mind, we leave undamnified the far larger proportion of his work to which the same censure does not apply. But if, on the other hand, through timorous respect and consideration for his genius, we flinch from this conclusion, we are then compelled to say that Blake, in full possession of his rationality, could write much that was fatuous and nonsensical—"balderdash,"

to use a plain word—as well as much that noble and admirable; and this leaves an un- sense of insecurity in his reader, and casts a over the whole body of the author's work. he must be a "queer fellow" (to use one of Bl own phrases) who, being sane, can write the of thing which, had it proceeded from a mad- we should recognize as altogether in chara At the present day, the word "enthusiast" l only a secondary and diffused meaning, ar mostly a term of commendation; but in our writers it designates a person of morbid spir and religious self-consciousness, a fanatic p insane. In both senses the word applies rig to Blake. In his accustomed moods he is enthusiast in the modern sense; a glorious thusiast at whose feet we can sit in venera and hear divine strains from his lips, and se hand prolific in magical creations. But ther moments not unfrequent when he become enthusiast in the older sense, and then we permitted to close our ears and eyes; u penalty, if we open them, of being forced to nounce the words a thick-coming and cont jargon, and the pencilled forms an indiscrim shadow-dance.

The imputation of madness seems to have Blake from his earliest years: it is not sim deduction arrived at by those who have co his completed work with amazement. ' day," writes Mr. Gilchrist with reference to artist's childhood, "a traveller was telling b wonders of some foreign city. 'Do you call splendid?' broke in young Blake. 'I should a city splendid in which the houses were of

the pavement of silver, the gates ornamented with precious stones.' At which outburst hearers were already disposed to shake the head, and pronounce the speaker crazed." Wordsworth, after reading the *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, spoke of them as the productions of "great but undoubtedly insane genius." Dr. Malkin, the Head Master of Bury St. Edmund's Grammar School, writing<sup>1</sup> in vindication of the claims of Blake as a man of uncommon genius, remarks: "The sceptic and the rational believer, uniting their forces against the visionary, pursue and scare a warm and brilliant imagination with the hue-and-cry of 'madness' . . . By them, in short, has he been stigmatized as an engraver who might do tolerably well if he was not mad." Blake himself (in his manuscript *Public Address*, intended to accompany the engraving of the *Canterbury Pilgrims*) writes: "Ye English engravers must come down from your high flights. . . . It is very true what you have said for these thirty-two years: I am mad, or else you are so. Both of us cannot be in our right senses. Posterity will judge by our works." Again (in the manuscript *Vision of the Last Judgment*): "The painter hopes that his friends, Anytus, Melitus, and Lycon, will perceive that they are not now in ancient Greece; and, though they can use the poison of calumny, the English public will be convinced that such a picture as this could never be painted by a madman or by one in

<sup>1</sup> In that very curious book entitled *A Father's Memoirs of his Child*, by Benjamin Heath Malkin, 1806. This is an account of an astonishingly precocious little Malkin, who died in his seventh year: the frontispiece to the volume is designed partly by Blake.

a state of outrageous manners; as these I both print and publish by all the means power." Flaxman is perhaps glanced at the name of Anytas, or Melitas, or Lycor reader will see, in two of the rhymed epigrams our volume each of them addressed to F the phrases "You call me mad," and "Thou me madman." In the *Examiner* newspaper 17 September 1809 appeared an abusive upon Blake's Exhibition, speaking of him unfortunate lunatic whose personal inoffensiveness secures him from confinement": this like the mere low-minded insolence of a fish-fag, yet it probably means what reports. As I have already observed, Mr. C (and here Mr. Swinburne is at one with repudiates the idea that Blake was, in any possible sense of the word, "mad." He expresses the opinions to the contrary expressed by Linnell, Mr. Palmer, Mr. Butts, Mr. C Varley, and others who were acquainted with Blake; and goes so far as to say that the "mad" is "one which none who knew the any man personally, at any period of his thought of applying to him." But here I christ wrote with less than his usual accuracy. The opinion entertained at times by Flaxman at any rate supposed by Blake to be entertained by the distinguished sculptor and old friend just been quoted: Mr. Crabb Robinson also considered Blake insane—as indeed Mr. C himself acknowledges elsewhere.

It has likewise been said that Blake, I strange in some of his writings or designs, behaved rationally in the affairs of practical



This, making some slight allowance, appears to be true. There are people who might object that he was unduly and unaccountably indifferent to money-making and worldly position; but I for one would not admit that as derogating in any way from his sanity of mind—rather as testifying to the greatness, if also in this epoch the uncommonness, of his character. If it is true that he seriously proposed to his wife to introduce into the household a second sharer of his bed and board, this must be counted a not strictly rational proceeding, even if we leave aside the question of morals; but we are always to remember that he did not carry any such proposal into effect, nor can we be certain that he ever so much as suggested it.

Again, it might be averred that he somewhat exceeded the bounds of healthy reason, as well as of good feeling, in the imputations which he would now and again cast on his friends and acquaintances. There is in especial one epigram of his concerning Hayley never yet put into print: it exists in the MS. book belonging to Mr. Dante G. Rossetti of which mention will again be made in our volume, and which Mr. Gilchrist drew upon. Blake evidently had no idea of ever printing it, or showing it about: he wrote the lines merely as a vent to feelings of pettishness and exasperation.

*“ On Hayley's Friendship.*

When Hayley<sup>1</sup> finds out what you cannot do,

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<sup>1</sup> In the original MS. this name, and also the name in the heading of the epigram, stands written simply “H—y.” There is no manner of doubt that Hayley is intended.



That is the very thing he'll set you to.<sup>1</sup>  
 If you break not your neck, 'tis not his fault :  
 But pecks of poison are not pecks of salt.  
 And, when he could not act upon my wife,  
 Hired a villain to bereave my life."

The last couplet conveys two distinct and most grave charges against poor Hayley; charges to which one can hardly suppose Blake himself to have lent any real credence. He seems rather to have been writing in a spirit of wilful and wanton perversity: the more monstrous and obviously untenable the accusation, the more pat it comes under a pen guided by mere testiness. It is exactly the spirit of a "naughty little boy." The phrase "when he could not act upon my wife" has a somewhat indeterminate, though manifestly virulent, meaning: the other statement, that Hayley "hired a villain to bereave my life," can only (it would seem) relate to the affair of the soldier Scholfield, who accused Blake of using seditious words, and thereby subjected him to trial on a criminal (not in reality a capital) charge. Now the fact is that Hayley, so far from hiring this villain to bereave Blake's life, had (as we have already seen) come forward immediately as his bail, and afterwards as a witness on his behalf. Blake, if he believed that Hayley had plotted against his life, can hardly have been quite sane: and, if he disbelieved it and yet wrote it, our conclusion as to his state of mind at that particular moment need only differ in detail. I may here point out that the line,

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<sup>1</sup> This probably refers to the well-intentioned efforts of Hayley to procure work for Blake in the way of miniature-painting and other such minor industries of art.

“Hired a villain to bereave my life,”

is repeated in this epigram from the poem *Fair Eleanor* in the *Poetical Sketches*: the other line also,

“And when he could not act upon my wife,”

seems to have some affinity to the course of the story in *Fair Eleanor*—more affinity at any rate to that effort of the Macphersonian romancing faculty in verse than to aught that we can suppose to have taken place in real life between Mr. Hayley and Mrs. Blake.

#### 4.—BLAKE'S FINE ART.

Blake's splendid, terrible, and daring imagination was embodied with equal force in the art of design, and in that of poetry. “Execution,” he has said, “is the chariot of genius”; and never did that charioteer reveal himself in more unmistakable guise than in the handiwork of Blake. To see one of his finer tempera or water-colour pictures, or of his partly colour-printed partly hand-coloured engraved designs, or of his designs engraved by himself on the ordinary system, is a new experience—one that you cannot prepare for nor forestall. The mysterious meaning of the work, its austere intensity of presentment, the rush (as it were) of spiritual and vital force into all its forms, animating them with strange fires of life and frenzies of endeavour, the rapture of effort and of repose, the stress and the hush, give these works a different character from aught else. In fact, they have not so much the semblance of inventions (highly inventive though they manifestly are in the ordinary æsthetic sense of the word)

as of visions—or, to recur to terms that we have already employed, of revelations or intuitions. There is severity, and there is beauty, each in a high degree: but what impresses the spectator most (consciously, or in many cases unconsciously) is the strength of receptivity or response in the designer—the energy with which he has clutched at the vision, the closeness of rendering with which he has succeeded in imparting it to others. It is like Iris in Homer, who receives a message from the God, and then recites it at length in the same identical words. Blake too has received the message, and he repeats it to us: and there is a tone in it which, although we never heard the original words, we perceive of a surety to be caught from the commissioning god, supernal or tartarean. For Blake by no means confines himself to the crests of Olympus, but is versed in the murk of Hades, and the recesses of the innermost and nethermost pit.

If the ideas and the style of Blake were original, his processes of execution were original also. The way in which he engraved his principal books, from the *Songs of Innocence* to the *Jerusalem* and the *Milton*, was, I believe, adopted from no predecessor; whether we regard the actual method of engraving employed, supplemented as it was by the colouring of the prints, or the intimate intermixture of engraved writing and designs, in which, as one may truly say, the art is made to permeate the poetry, insomuch that the union of the two becomes something different from what either of them would be alone, or both in mere mechanical juxtaposition. Blake himself, in a prospectus which he issued in 1793, spoke of his

having "invented a method of printing both letter-press and engraving in a style more ornamental, uniform, and grand, than any before discovered." Another peculiarity, almost or quite original, is the independence which the designs, spite of this very close union, preserve for themselves, as distinct from the poetry: the connection of the two, in point of subject-matter, being often indistinct and dubious, and sometimes apparently null. Thus the designs (in many instances, but of course not in all) do not constitute illustrations of the text, but accompaniments to it, or supplementary suggestions and reinforcements. Terror is heaped on terror, or loveliness wedded to loveliness: each enters the mind by a separate avenue, of eye or ear, and impresses besides a different image upon it, but not a discordant one. It may be added that, if the writing is frequently unintelligible or nearly so, the allied design is the same: we feel its potent and arcane influence, but cannot dismember this into articulated meanings.

We have referred to three species of Blake's artistic work: his temperas or water-colours, his coloured engravings, and his uncoloured engravings. As to details affecting these productions, a good deal might have to be said by way of criticism, were we now concerned with that: powerful but often audacious and exaggerated drawing, strained or impossible attitudes, conventional and sometimes vapid faces, accessories reduced to the barest rudiments, and generally a disposition to leave off as soon as the conception is conveyed in form and colour, whether or not the work has been carried on up to the recognized

standard of executive completeness. The water-colours, and along with them the tempera-pictures in their degree, are generally pale and washy in colour, slight in handling; and, throughout the whole range of Blake's art, there is a great deal of what we term "old-fashioned"—primitively jejune and stiff, not without puerility. The colour-worked engravings have greater strength and depth than the water colours, and are in numerous instances most forcible, not only in the idea of the thing to be done, but in the practical doing of it. The uncoloured engravings—of which the chief examples are the Young's *Night-Thoughts*, the *Job*, the *Dante*, and (engraved by an alien hand) the *Grave*—include many of Blake's sublimest inventions and noblest treatments,—the *Job* in especial, which is in some points of view his masterpiece. Yet in the *Night-Thoughts* we find a certain hardness and crudity of execution; and in the *Job* the characteristic mannerisms of form and of action appear in very ample measure, while the precision of handiwork makes these blemishes perhaps less condonable than in the more rapidly touched and freely handled designs which were engraved with a view to colouring. All minor points of this kind, however, may be left almost unnoticed, in such an account of Blake as ours: they merely need to be glanced at, not enlarged upon. Next after his majestic imagination, fertile in awfulness and portent, yet often also sunny and lambent like an of April sky, full of freshness and of promise,—and after his potent wielding of the human form, as expressive of energy, aspiration, ardour, and all of the divine or dæmonic in man—next after

ese great qualities we should perhaps place the treatment of light, and especially of flame, as Blake's highest distinction in art; although, indeed, his mastery over colour likewise, in certain vivid combinations of simplicity and of intensity, is very marked and admirable.

It may be as well to give here, from Blake's MS. book previously spoken of, three memoranda showing his peculiar and ingenious processes of engraving:

"*To engrave on pewter.*<sup>1</sup> Let there be first a drawing made correctly with black-lead pencil: let nothing be to seek. Then rub it off on the plate, covered with white wax; or perhaps pass it through press. This will produce certain and determined forms on the plate, and time will not be wasted in seeking them afterwards. *To wood-cut on pewter.*<sup>2</sup> Lay a ground on the plate, and smoke it as for etching. Then trace your outline, and, beginning with the spots of light on each object, with an oval-pointed needle scrape off the ground, as a direction for your graver. Then proceed to graving, with the ground on the plate; being as careful as possible not to hurt the ground, because it, being black, will show perfectly what is wanted. *To wood-cut on copper.* Lay a ground as for etching. Trace, &c., and,

<sup>1</sup> Pewter had been used by other engravers before Blake—for instance, by Albert Dürer.

<sup>2</sup> The engraved designs by Blake to *Little Tom the Sailor* (a ballad written by Hayley) are examples of this process. The rather incongruous name which Blake bestowed upon it is of course to be understood as meaning "engraving on pewter in relief." Some methods of engraving on metal in relief had been known and practised from of old.

instead of etching the blacks, etch the white and bite it in."

Blake's so-called frescoes, which are properly rather tempera-pictures than anything else, were painted in water-colour on a ground of glue-whiting laid on canvas, linen, or panel. Those canvases or linens have in many instances cracked and been ruined by damp. White was laid on, mixed with the colours, which were tempered with carpenter's glue. Blake was pleased, at a late date in his life, to find that this process, of his own re-invention, was mentioned in the medical treatise of Cennino Cennini. His colour-print designs were sometimes executed in oil and water-colour combined. In such cases he would draw his design on millboard, strong and thick, and paint it in oil-colour, of such kind and in such a state of fusion as to blur readily when printed off on paper. He then finished up with water-colour the roughly stamped and "accidental-looking" impression on the paper. For a second impression, he repainted his outline on the millboard, thus slightly varying the several prints.

The earliest known painting by Blake, a water-colour afterwards varnished, was *The Penance of Jane Shore in St. Paul's Church*: this was done towards 1778, and some other historic-romantic subjects soon afterwards. *War unchained by Angel—Fire, Pestilence, and Famine*, following, dated in 1784, is the first of his ideal inventions or rather the first to which a definite date can be affixed. The earliest tempera-picture, 1785, is *The Bard* (from Gray), which was re-exhibited in the collection at Burlington House in 1873—a splendid and wonderful piece of colour, in which



It is freely used, and a very bold realization in form of Gray's poetic framework. In the same year were produced the first of his scriptural treatments—the three water-colour subjects from the history of Joseph which were to be seen in the International Exhibition of 1862. A few others of his works, most remarkable for power or for subject-matter, may here be particularized. It would be beyond our scope to describe or criticize them: the mere titles, in some instances, speak for themselves, and testify to the imaginative force of the designer. 1795, *The Lazar House*, from Milton, called also *The House of Death*, colour-printed. *Behemoth creating Adam*, similar, truly a stupendous thing. *Newton*, similar. Towards 1801, *Heads of the Poets* (eighteen), executed in tempera for Hayley's library at Felpham: Homer, Euripides, Lucan, Dante, Chaucer, Spenser, Tasso, Shakespeare, Sidney, Camoens, Milton, Dryden, Otway, Pope, Young,<sup>1</sup> Cowper, Voltaire, Hayley. 1803, *The Sacrifice of Jephtha's Daughter*, water-colour. Towards 1805, *Fire*, similar. 1808, *The Last Judgment*, tempera, painted for the Countess of Egremont, and described by Blake in some detail, in a letter addressed to Mr. Ozias Humphrey, the miniature-painter. Nine designs from *Paradise Lost*, water-colour. Towards 1809, *The Spiritual Form of Nelson guiding Leviathan, in whose wrappings are enfolded the nations of the earth*, tempera. *The Spiritual Form of Pitt guiding Behemoth*,

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<sup>1</sup> I have recently been informed that the two heads here named (as in the catalogue drawn up by me, and printed in Mr. Gilchrist's vol. 2) Euripides and Young are more probably Demosthenes (who was not however a poet) and Blair.



similar. *The Ancient Britons: In the last battl of King Arthur only three Britons escaped,—thes were the Strongest Man, the Beautifullest Man, am the Ugliest Man*, tempera.<sup>1</sup> 1811, *The Judgment of Paris*, colour-printed. 1822, *The Wise and Foolish Virgins*, water-colour. *The Compassion of Pharaoh's Daughter* (Finding of Moses), similar. *Moses erecting the Brazen Serpent*, similar. *Job confessing his presumption to God*, similar, (a different design from any of those in the engravec Job series: of these, two separate sets of water-colours exist, one belonging to Mr. Linnell, and the other to Lord Houghton). *Bathsheba at the Bath, seen by David*, tempera. *The Plague stayed at the Threshing-floor of Araamah the Jebusite*, similar. *The Entombment of Christ* water-colour. *The Sealing of the Stone of Christ's Sepulchre, and setting of the Watch*, similar. *The Angel rolling the stone from the Sepulchre* similar. *Christ appearing to the Apostles after the Resurrection*, tempera. *Satan exulting over Eve*, similar. "Thou wast perfect till iniquity was found in thee," (a figure of Lucifer), water-colour. *An Allegory of the Spiritual Condition of Man* (tempera, one of Blake's largest works, some 5½ feet by 4 in dimensions: not unlike a Last Judgment in general conception.) *The Characters in Spenser's Faery Queen*, water-colour. *The River of Life*, similar. "Pity, like a naked newborn

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<sup>1</sup> I believe there is a tempera-picture of this subject, concerning which Blake wrote some of the most striking and interesting pages of his *Descriptive Catalogue*. I have not however seen any such picture, but only a water-colour in the ordinary mode of execution.

babe," &c. (quotation from *Macbeth*), colour-printed. *Hecate*, similar. *The Accusers of Theft, Adultery, and Murder*, similar.

It is not an easy thing to express in words that degree of natural truth, charm, and observation, which is to be found in Blake's work, combined as it is with a haughty disregard of the simple visual facts of Nature, whenever he chose, and he often did choose, to neglect these. It was truly a *sovereign* disregard: he would be the king over Nature—the Ahasuerus to repudiate her as Vashti, or to reach out the sceptre towards her as Esther. Clearly, he was born, like every other great artist, with the seeing eye—with the power to discern appearances rapidly, vividly, and intensely, and to reproduce them at once if in demand, or to store them up for future application, direct or indirect. Many things that he saw he loved, and he painted them masterfully or tenderly. "May God," he once said in his old age to a very lovely little girl, "make this world to you, my child, as beautiful as it has been to me:" and doubtless he was thinking then of the material visible world, as well as of the general tenour of life-long experience. But his ideal or abstract faculty acted with far greater strength than his simple power of perception and realization: he gazed *athwart* Nature, and drew, to be contemplated by the mind and partly by the eye, what he saw at the end of the perspective. The artist is a sub-creator: such most preëminently was Blake. After marvelling, with awe and worship, at the ocean, or the sunlit zenith, or the star-paved midnight sky, or the wonders of the spirit-in-

formed human frame, we have all felt the drop of water, a blade of grass, a grain of sand, a golden hair from a woman's are equally incommensurable evidences of creative energy: the soul bows down to them with the same unfathomed sense of unknown and the unknowable. Blake furnishes us, in his degree, with a like experience: with shapes of vast imaginative appeal, he gives us here and there a little touch of natural beauty and truth—a low horizon, a winding path, a sprig of leafage—purely and clearly felt by himself, and thoroughly enjoyable. The work of his ideal perception upon such materials is mainly in the way of simplifying and condensing: it may transmute but not falsify. He unveils to us their remote suggestions, and their intimate presence. Often he is wilfully oblivious of objects of this class: but, when disposed to use them, he shows that they are not alien to his mind, or from his eye and hand.

In taking leave of the subject of Blake's work in the designing art, we cannot do better than collect together a few of his observations on the relations of outward nature to the artistic faculty in general, and more particularly to his own

“Practice and opportunity very soon teach the language of art. Its spirit and poetry, centering in the imagination alone, never can be taught; these make the artist.”—“Natural objects all do did and do weaken, deaden, and obliterate, in their nature in me.”—“The man who asserts that there is no such thing as softness in art, and that everything is definite and determinate, has been told this by practice, but by inspiration

vision ; because vision is determinate and perfect, and he copies *that* without fatigue. Everything *seen* is definite and determinate. Softness is produced by comparative strength and weakness, alone in the marking of the forms. I say these principles would never be found out by the study of Nature, without con- or in-nate science."—"No one can ever design till he has learned the language of art by making many finished copies both of Nature and Art, and of whatever comes in his way, from earliest childhood. The difference between a bad artist and a good is that the bad artist *seems* to copy a great deal, and the good one *does* copy a great deal . . . Servile copying is the great merit of copying . . . Invention depends altogether upon execution or organization. As that is right or wrong, so is the invention perfect or imperfect. Michael Angelo's art depends on Michael Angelo's execution altogether."—"To learn the language of art, *Copy for ever* is my rule. But models are difficult—enslave one—efface from one's mind a conception or reminiscence which was better."—"Men think that they can copy Nature as correctly as I copy imagination. This they will find impossible : and all the copies, or pretended copies, of Nature, from Rembrandt to Reynolds, prove that Nature becomes to its victim nothing but blots and blurs. Why are copies of Nature incorrect, while copies of imagination are correct? This is manifest to all. The English artist may be assured that he is doing an injury and injustice to his country while he studies and imitates the effects of Nature. England will never rival Italy while we servilely copy what the wise Italians, Raphael and Michael Angelo, scorned, nay

abhorred, as Vasari tells us. What kind of intellects must he have who sees only the colours of things, and not the forms of things? No man of sense can think that an imitation of the objects of Nature is the art of painting, or that such imitation (which any one may easily perform) is worthy of notice—much less that such an art should be the glory and pride of a nation . . . . If the art is no more than this, it is no better than any other manual labour.”—“Next time I have the happiness to see you,<sup>1</sup> I am determined to paint another portrait of you from life, in my best manner, for memory will not do in such minute operations; for I have now discovered that, without nature before the painter’s eye, he can never produce anything in the walks of natural painting. Historical designing is one thing, and portrait-painting another, and they are as distinct as any two arts can be. Happy would that man be who could unite them! . . . If you have not nature before you for every touch, you cannot paint portrait; and, if you have nature before you at all, you cannot paint history . . . . Nature and Fancy are two things, and can never be joined; neither ought any one to attempt it, for it is idolatry, and destroys the soul.”—“I assert for myself that I do not behold the outward creation, and that to me it is hindrance and not action. ‘What!’ it will be questioned, ‘when the sun rises, do you not see a disc of fire, somewhat like a guinea?’ ‘Oh no, no! I see an innumerable company of the heavenly host, crying ‘Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God al-

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<sup>1</sup> Mr. Butts. This passage is extracted from a letter addressed to that gentleman in September, 1801.

mighty!' I question not my corporeal eye, any more than I would question a window, concerning sight. I look through it, and not with it."

To these remarks on Nature and Imagination I will add a few of those which Blake has left us regarding other artists. As in almost all that came from the same hand, there is a great deal in them. But the reader who wishes to profit by them, and not to be simply misled or exasperated, must understand and apply them—must not extract from them, as for his personal guidance, a meaning as crude and unmodified as the phrase in which it is couched. Blake, alike in perception and in intellect, scorned the curb: he did not mince matters to his hearer or reader—still less when he was writing (as in some of these utterances) mere private memoranda. The frequently recurring abuse of Titian, as a bad colourist and what is rather surprising to the reader not yet fully broken into Blake's *dicta*, and must always remain worthy of rejection. One fact to be remembered is that very probably Blake had never yet seen a genuine (or at any rate never a first-class) Titian. Those were not the days of National Galleries, of Exhibitions of Old Masters at British Institution or Burlington House, and of fairly accessible private collections of the like class.

"This man [Sir Joshua Reynolds] was here to depress art: this is the opinion of William Blake. . . . While Sir Joshua was rolling in riches, Barry was poor and unemployed, except by his own energy; Mortimer was called a madman; and only portrait-painting was applauded and rewarded by the rich and great. Reynolds and Gainsborough dotted and blurred one against the other, and

divided all the English world between them. Felsi, indignant, almost hid himself: I am hid.—“Poetry, as it exists now on earth, in the various remains of ancient authors; music, as it exists in old tunes or melodies; painting and sculpture, as they exist in the remains of antiquity, and in the works of more modern genius; each is Inspiration, and cannot be surpassed: it is perfect and eternal. Milton, Shakspeare, Michael Angelo, Raphael; the finest specimens of ancient sculpture and painting and architecture, Gothic, Grecian, Hindoo, and Egyptian,—are the extent of the human mind. The human mind cannot go beyond the gift of God the Holy Ghost. To suppose that Art can go beyond the finest specimens of Art that are now in the world is not knowing what Art is: it is being blind to the gifts of the Spirit.”—“This picture [one of Blake's own, *Satan calling up his Legions*] was likewise painted at intervals, for experiment on colours without any oily vehicle. . . . These pictures, among numerous others painted for experiment, were the result of temptations and perturbations, labouring to destroy imaginative power by means of that infernal machine called *Chiaroscuro*, in the hands of Venetian and Flemish Demons. . . . The spirit of Titian was particularly active in raising doubts concerning the possibility of executing without a model, and, when once he had raised the doubt, it became easy for him to snatch away the vision time after time;<sup>1</sup> for, when the artist took his

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<sup>1</sup> The reader who gives a little attention to these words will readily perceive that there is nothing trivial or absurd about them,—only a different way of putting the facts. The

il to execute his ideas, his power of imagination weakened so much, and darkened, that the glory of Nature, and of pictures of the various objects, possessed his mind, instead of appropriate execution resulting from the inventions. . . . Rubens is a most outrageous demon, and, by bringing the remembrance of his pictures and the difficulty of execution, hinders all power of individual thought; so that the man who is possessed by this demon loses all admiration of any other artist than Rubens, and those who were his imitators become journeymen. He causes to the Florentine and Roman artist fear to execute; and, though his original conception was all fire and animation, he loads it with hellish brownness, and blocks up the gates of light except one,<sup>1</sup> and that one he locks up with iron bars,—till the victim is obliged to conform to the Florentine and Roman practice, and to the Venetian and Flemish. Correggio is a weak and effeminate and consequently a most cruel tyrant, whose whole delight is to cause endless trouble to whoever suffers him to enter his mind. . . . He diffuses a love of soft and even tints without contrast, and of endless reflected lights, that crowd upon one another, and hinder all correct drawing from appearing to be correct; for, if one of Raphael's or Michael Angelo's figures was to be

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in the case of Blake of Titian's pictures (or, as he prefers to call it, "the spirit of Titian") was such that Blake felt that he was as to his own power of executing a painting without models; and, being thus discouraged, he failed in attempting to realize his conception. All that follows is fully open to a rational interpretation, and his sounds more applicable to Rembrandt than to Titian.



traced, and Correggio's reflections and refractions to be added to it, there would soon be an end of proportion and strength, and it would be weak and pappy and lumbering and thick-headed, like his own works : but then it would have softness and evenness by a twelvemonth's labour, where a month would with judgment have finished it better and higher."—"While the works of Pope and Dryden are looked upon as the same art as those of Shakspeare and Milton, while the works of Strange and Woollett are looked upon as the same art with those of Raphael<sup>1</sup> and Albert Durer, there can be no art in a nation but such as is subservient to the interest of the monopolizing trader. Englishmen ! rouse yourselves from the fatal slumber into which booksellers and trading dealers have thrown you, under the artfully propagated pretence that a translation or a copy of any kind can be as honourable to a nation as an original, belying the English character in that well-known saying, 'Englishmen improve what others invent.' This even Hogarth's works prove a detestable falsehood. No man can improve an original invention ; nor can an original invention exist without execution organized, delineated, and articulated, either by God or man. . . . The unorganized blots and blurs of Rubens and Titian are not art ; nor can their method ever express ideas or imaginations, any more than Pope's metaphysical jargon of rhyming. . . . I do not condemn Rubens, Rembrandt, or Titian, because they did not understand drawing, but because

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<sup>1</sup> Blake evidently considered (along with some other connoisseurs) that Raphael had himself at times engraved designs of his own.

they did not understand colouring: how long shall I be forced to beat this into men's ears? I do not condemn Strange or Woollett because they did not understand drawing, but because they did not understand engraving. I do not condemn Pope or Dryden because they did not understand imagination, but because they did not understand verse. Their colouring, graving, and verse, can never be applied to art: that is not either colouring, graving, or verse, which is unappropriate to the subject. He who makes a design must know the effect and colouring proper to be put to that design; and will never take that of Rubens, Rembrandt, or Titian, to turn that which is soul and life into a mill or machine."

#### 5.—BLAKE'S WRITINGS.

The character of Blake's poetry bears, it need hardly be said, a considerable affinity to that of his work in the art of design; he himself, it is said, thought the former the finer of the two. There is, however, no little difference between them, when their main elements are considered proportionally. In both, Blake almost totally ignores actual life and its evolution, and the passions and interactions of men as elicited by the wear and tear of real society. True, individual instances might be cited where he has in view some topic of the day, or some incident of life, simple or harrowing, such as social or dramatic writers might take cognizance of. But these also he treats with a primitiveness or singularity which, if it does not remove the subjects from our sympathy—and a few cases of very highly sympa-

thetic treatment are to be found—does not leave them within the region of the ideas sometimes of the intangible. As a rule, he does not deal at all with the complicated practical interests of life, or the influence of these on the character; but he possesses the large range of primordial emotion, from the utter innocent happy unconscious instinct of infancy, up to the fervours of the prophet, inspired to announce, to judge, and to reprobate.

This range of feeling and of faculty is, as we have just said, expressed equally in the designs and in the poetry of Blake, but not in the same proportions. In the designs, the energetic, the splendid, the majestic, the grand, the portentous, the terrific, play the larger part, and constitute the finer portion of the work; while the softer emotions, and the perception of what is gentle and its loveliness, are both less prominent in quantity and realized with less mastery and sureness. In the poems these conditions are reversed. We find Blake expressing frequently and with the most limpid and final perfection—in some of the essential aspects, unsurpassed or indeed equalled—the innocent and simple impulses of human nature; the laughter and prattle of a child; the vivid transforming freshness of youthful love; the depth and self-devotion of parental affection; the trust in the Father whom the eye hath not seen. Very noble utterance is also given from time to time to some subject of discipline, or awe to the human soul, or even of terror: generally it is not with these topics that he deals in his lyrical poems. He reserves them for his Prophetic Books, written in a style w

though poetical and rhapsodic, does not bring the works within the pale of verse, and barely allows them to obtain access to the human understanding. It is in these scriptures, rather than in the poems properly so called, that we have to seek for the written counterpart of that supernatural stress and that sense of the appalling—now profound in its quietude, now almost bacchant in its orgies—which tell upon us so potently in his designs; and certainly the written form of all this is by no means equal to the plastic one. Leaving these Prophetic Books for the present, we may say of the other rhythmic poems that the spiritual intuition of which we have already spoken as Blake's most central faculty, and a lyric outflow the purest and most spontaneous, fashioning the composition in its general mould, and drifting aright each word and cadence, are the most observable and precious qualities. This statement as to the wording and cadences must of course be understood with due limitation; for Blake, exquisitely true to the mark as he can come in such matters, is often also palpably faulty—transgressing even the obvious laws of grammar and of metre. Power of thought is likewise largely present in several cases; not of analytic or reasoning thought, for which Blake had as little turn in his poems as liking in his *dicta*, but broad and strong intellectual perception, telling in aid of that still higher and primary faculty of intuition.

Blake had more natural mastery over the oracular sublime than over the heroic sublime, and incomparably greater practice in the former. When he attempted the latter, he generally lost

himself in an Ossianic tumidity and mistiness; he would himself have accepted as praise any criticism assimilating him with Ossian, as he openly professed to admire and believe in the volume ushered into the world by Macpherson. The Ossianic tendency is to be traced, for instance, in the poem *Fair Eleanor*, one of the *Poetical Sketches*, and most especially in *Tiriel*. *Gwin, King of Norway*, also in the *Poetical Sketches*, is a more than commonly favourable specimen of the same Ossianic afflatus, blended with that of our old ballads. In the *Fair Eleanor*, another super-added influence, derived from the *Castle of Otranto* or the like thrilling romance, can also be surmised.

I have already made mention of the sequence of Blake's lyrical writings, printed during his lifetime: the *Poetical Sketches*, *Songs of Innocence*, *Songs of Experience*. The *Book of Thel* (which, although not strictly lyrical nor rhymed, I have thought fairly admissible into the present collection) came out in the same year as the first series of the *Songs*. The other poems—among which the *Broken Love* may be cited for its excellence, and *The Everlasting Gospel* for its importance in scale and purport—are mostly of uncertain date; probably the great majority of them were written later than the *Songs of Experience*, but I have no reason for regarding any of them as the product of the closing years of Blake's life. He was thirty-seven years of age at the date (1794) of the publication of the *Experience*: and, allowing for some exception here or there, I infer that all his extant lyrical work was executed before he had lapsed into the fifties. The *Poetical Sketches* are simply

thing; whether we regard the fact that these were written between Blake's twelfth and sixteenth years, or reflect that they thus pre-empt even the first publications of Cowper and Burns, not to speak of other and later authors whose work the modern spirit and tone of Blake's are more distinctly perceptible. Blake, when in his teens, was a wholly unique poet far ahead of his contemporaries, and of his predecessors of three or four generations, equally able to do what he himself could do, and in his sympathy to draw from the same sources of inspiration. In his fragmentary drama of *Edward the Third* we recognize a poet who has loved and studied Shakspeare to good purpose: and several of the short lyrics in the *Poetical Sketches* have the same sort of pungent and indefinable but not evanescent—that is to say, so to the choicest Elizabethan songs; the play of emotion,—or play of colour, as it might be called; the like ripeness and roundness, poetic, and tolerant of translation into prose. At the time when Blake wrote these songs, and for a long time before, no one was doing anything of at all the same kind. Not but that, even in Blake, such words occur here and there betraying the *poet* of the eighteenth century.<sup>1</sup>

It cannot be said that he ever surpassed in the purely lyrical gift, nor yet indeed in literary power, the most excellent things in his earliest work. The *Songs of Innocence*, however, are,

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<sup>1</sup> For instance the line (from a peculiarly lovely and original poem in the *Poetical Sketches*),

“ And Phœbus fired my vocal rage; ”

from the couplets *To Mrs. Butts* (1800),

“ Receive this tribute from a harp sincere.”



taken in their totality, fully up to the same mark; and they have the additional value conferred by unity of scheme, and relation of parts. Some of the little poems included in this series are the most perfect expression ever given (so far as I know) to babe-life—to what a man can remember of himself as an infant, or can enter into as existing in other infants, or can love as of the essence of infancy. Blake was a believer (with more or less exactness of dogma) in the preëxistence of the human soul. These poems are very like the utterance of a babe, sentient at once of its present infantine and of its past matured existence; feeling the life and thinking the thoughts of infancy, yet feeling and thinking all this through the medium of a higher consciousness, a fullness of spiritual stature which once was, and again shall be. The comparative merit of the *Songs of Innocence* and the later-written *Songs of Experience* has been debated by competent critics, with diverse conclusions. To me it seems that the finest compositions in the *Experience* are fully as admirable as the finest in the *Innocence*; the unsuccessful items, however, being more numerous, and the faulty elements throughout producing a more damaging effect. The tone of thought, necessarily more varied, is also, in a sense, more elevated, but not so constantly well sustained or at unity with itself.

The *Songs of Experience* here and there, and also the *Book of Thel* (not to speak of examples even in the earlier poems) show us something of the obscure side of Blake's poetry; his arbitrary use of words and symbols, and a certain way he had of *hurrying* his conceptions into shape. Clearly,

no poet had conceptions more immediate: Blake, by an inchoate method of execution, where things are said with as much abruptness as vividness, and are indicated or approximated rather than exhibited, and so left to explain themselves or not as the case may turn out, succeeds in conveying to his reader a good deal of this same immediate impression felt by himself. It cannot be so sudden and striking to the reader as it was to the writer; but the very obscurity serves to make it rapid. The reader, while he feels that explanation is needed (and explanation can only be a lengthy process, and so far conflicts with the immediateness of impression) has a sense also of something hastily presented to him, and as hastily withdrawn. He snatches a meaning, or else must miss it; for, before he has time to think it out, another image has replaced the former one. In some of the remaining poems the obscurity increases; and a certain proportion of them is really not intelligible, save by an effort of conjecture: I may cite *The Crystal Cabinet*, *The Mental Traveller*, and *William Bond*. The two former, however, with all their difficulty, are exceedingly fine; and some others of our volume, especially *Broken Love* and *Auguries of Innocence*, rank among Blake's noblest performances. *The Everlasting Gospel*, again, is in parts enough to baulk the interpreting faculty of the most ingenious, were it required to substitute a precise explanation for the *furor* of the poet, itself combined out of the passion of worship and the passion of contradiction. This extraordinary poem, and the great majority of those which follow it in our volume, were not published during Blake's life. *The Everlasting Gospel*, in



fact, had never till now been published anywhere in full; the others, with comparatively few exceptions, appeared for the first time in Mr. Gilchrist's book. Along with *The Everlasting Gospel*, some other brief compositions are now for the first time reproduced in a printed shape from the MS. book by Blake belonging to Mr. Dante G. Rossetti. These waifs and strays include a few of the *Epigrams and Satirical Pieces on Art and Artists*; some of which, as also of the *Couplets and Fragments*, are more grotesque than vivacious, and a few not far removed from pointless absurdity. Every now and then, however, Blake shows a real epigrammatic faculty: he hits a stinging and ringing stroke, the sound of which is easily remembered by whoever heard it, and the sensation of it assuredly never forgotten by the person to whom it was administered.

Of some of Blake's early poems, it has been observed by a very discerning critic,<sup>1</sup>—and the same remark might be applied to his poetical works generally—“They have the grandeur of lofty simplicity, not of laboured pomp; a grandeur like that which invests our imaginations of the patriarchs. By a well, beneath a palm-tree, stands one who wears but a linen turban and a

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<sup>1</sup> The gentleman who, under the signature of “B. V.” wrote some articles in the *National Reformer* in 1866, reviewing Mr. Gilchrist's book. This is the same writer who has produced in 1874, also in the *National Reformer*, an extremely remarkable poem, of philosophical meaning and symbolic or visionary form, named *The City of Dreadful Night*. It was preceded, three or four years ago, by another poem, fully as noticeable but practically unknown, entitled *Weddah and Om el Bonain*, an oriental story of passion and adverse fate.

the flowing robe, and who but watches brows-sheep, and camels drinking: yet no modern arch, however gorgeously arrayed and brightly surrounded, can compare with him in ecstasy." And again: "Every man living in vision, and developing an intense interior life, seems to give quite a peculiar significance to certain words and phrases and emblems. Metaphors which to the common bookwrights and formalists are mere handy counters, symbols almost as abstract and unrelated to the things they represent as are the  $x$  and  $y$  and  $z$  used in solving an algebraic problem, are, for *him*, burdened with rich and various freights of spiritual experience. They are ships in which he has sailed over uncharted seas to unmapped shores; in which he has struggled through wild tempests, and been tranced in divine calms; in which he has returned with treasures from all the zones: he loves them as the sailor loves his ship. His writings may thus appear, to any one reading them for the first time, very obscure, and often almost ludicrous: the strange reader sees a battered hull, where the writer sees a marvellous circumnavigation."

The latter of these two extracts applies more particularly to the *Prophetic Books*, to which we must now devote some little attention. Among writers concerning Blake, the only one who has examined these works without being bewildered and stunned, and hounded into desperation and renunciation, is Mr. Swinburne: he has made a study of the books, in the spirit at once of an explorer and an investigator—an enthusiastic admirer of what is great in Blake, and an undaunted

investigator of what is profound, or intelligible or difficult, or frantic, in the books. He has probed each of them singly, and all of them collectively, feeling that what Blake regarded as a sublime religious revelation is probably as well deserving of attention as some of the other less neglected manifestations of the combined faculties of faith and of poetic rapture. One of his observations may be extracted here, as needing to be borne in mind on the very threshold of any such disquisition. "There are two points in the work of Blake which first claim notice and explanation; his mysticism, and his mythology. This latter is in fact hardly more, in its relation to the former, than the clothes to the body, or the body to the soul. To make either comprehensible, it is requisite above all things to get sight of the man in whom they became incarnate and active as forces or as opinions." I shall not attempt here to do over again in a hurry and inadequately what Mr. Swinburne has done deliberately, and with excellent judgment and insight; but would in the main refer the reader to that gentleman's book, supplemented by only a few remarks in extension of what I have already said with respect to Blake's ideas and his writings.

Ample evidence exists to satisfy us that Blake had real conceptions in the metaphysical or supersensual regions of thought—conceptions which might have been termed speculations in other people, but in him rather intuitions; and that the Prophetic Books embody these in some sort of way cannot be disputed. He did not want them to be exactly understood, in the analytical, unravelling sense. "Allegory addressed to the

intellectual powers" (he has written *à propos* of the *Jerusalem*), "while it is altogether hidden from the corporeal understanding, is my definition of the most sublime poetry." The Prophetic Books have indeed sublimity and power in large measure; invention both of mythology and of imagery; and much which, if it does not take hold of the imagination of the reader, does at least appeal to it. Yet, after everything that ought to be allowed in favour of the Prophetic Books has been conceded, I must confess my opinion that they are, taken as a whole, neither readable nor even entirely sane performances. They are dark and chaotic to the extreme degree; ponderous and turbid; battling and baffling, like the arms of a windmill when the wind blows shiftingly from all quarters; full of action as inconceivable as the personages, and personages as insoluble as their acts; replete with uncouth and arbitrary nomenclature,—hieroglyphics sometimes seemingly void of demotic equivalents. Urizen, Fuzon, Los and Enitharmon<sup>1</sup> (Time and Space), Theotormon, Ahania, Har and Heva, Ore, Rintrah, Palamabron; and, for places, Golgonooza, Bowlahoola (Art and Law), &c.—such are the names with which Blake condemns us to become familiar before we can so much as begin to follow out his revelations and his myths. Various passages are truly formless, according to any admissible standard of poetic or

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<sup>1</sup> Mr. Oliver Madox-Brown has pointed out to me that *Los* must be an anagram of *Sol* (quite an appropriate name for the Time spirit). Following this clue, one can turn *Enitharmon* into *An-rithmon*, numberless, limitless. *Ore* may possibly be made out of *Cor*.

rhapsodic form : a much greater number yield not stable or tangible sense,—they hurtle in your ears, and are gone. Notwithstanding all this, the greatness of the man—the directness and force of his mind, and sometimes its vigorous grasp as well—are abundantly evident in the Prophetic Books. A reader susceptible to poetic influences cannot make light of them ; nor can one who has perused Mr. Swinburne's essay affect to consider that they lack meaning—positive and important, though not definite and developed, meaning. If an intellectual man were relegated to entire solitude for some months or years, with nothing to read except Blake's Prophetic Books, he would naturally study and ponder them ; piece together their myths, trace their connection, reason out their system. If at the end of the process he considered these works altogether right and fine, or even absolutely free from a tinge of something other than sanity, he would have arrived at a conclusion different from mine : but I have no hesitation in thinking that he would relish the books vastly more at the close than at the commencement of his studies, and that his admiration for them would be all the stronger in proportion to the elevation and amplitude of his own mind. He would be quite capable of ranging them among the most inspired, as certainly among the most uncommon, productions of the human intellect.

We have already run over the names of the Prophetic Books ; but will here add a few words, chiefly to point out the main bearings of them in relation to some of the special dominant ideas which pre-occupied Blake.

The poem of *Tiriel*, now for the first time

hed,<sup>1</sup> is not precisely a "Prophetic Book"; a mystic legendary story, of a primæval anic kind—a piece of "Cyclopean architec- in verse; corresponding, in the narrative to what the other Prophetic Books represent visionary or mythic-doctrinal class. Blake ntly at one time attached some considerable e of importance to *Tiriel*, as he illustrated h a series of designs in Indian ink, twelve umber.<sup>2</sup> It has a certain (as one might it) Indo-Ossianic grandeur. The story,

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his poem exists in Blake's handwriting, and the MS. until recently, the property of Mrs. Gilchrist. It was y me prior to the publication of Mr. Gilchrist's *Life of* in 1863. While the present edition of Blake's Poems preparation, I had not an opportunity of re-examining position, so as to provide for including it in the con- of this volume; finally, however, it has been forth- ; and I am clearly of opinion it ought not to be d. *Tiriel* appears printed at the *end* of our collection : ect place, according to order of date, would, I conceive, een just before or just after *Theb*. Blake's MS. of s neatly executed, and is evidently not the rough first the handwriting appears to me to belong to no late in his life. This character of handwriting prevails up the close of the poem. With the words (in section 8) (*Tiriel, King of the West,*" a new and less precise 'handwriting begins; clearly indicating, I think, that after an interval of some years, took up the poem ished it, perhaps in much more summary fashion than at first intended.

ese are entered in my catalogue of Blake's designs rist's vol. 2, "Uncoloured Works, No. 156." They tainly, as Mr. Swinburne has pointed out, meant to te *Tiriel*, although this fact is only dubiously sug- in my catalogue. Mr. Swinburne (pp. 199, 200, of k) gives a brief exposition of the probable purport of not, in essentials, much unlike what I find to say t in the text.

merely as a narration, is clear enough, but the *raison d'être* of the agents and incidents is anything but perspicuous. A brief account of the personages will perhaps assist us to as much understanding of the poem as can be needed by way of introduction. Har and Heva (named also in *The Song of Los*) are here encountered. They are shown as lapsed, through extreme old age, into a second childhood, and tended by their nurse Mnetha: they symbolize, I apprehend, some such aboriginal pair of universal parents as Adam and Eve. They are the parents or progenitors of Tiriël, "King of the West," who, at the end of the poem, reproaches Har for his misgovernment of his children. Tiriël represents perhaps, tyrannic coercion of thought and character, more especially what we call "hypocrisy." He has misruled his own children, by repression and terrorism, as much as Har had spoiled his by trusting all to uncultured animal instinct. Tiriël's sons are denounced and cursed by him as rebels, and finally his curse slays the great majority of them. He is, throughout the course of the poem, a blind and despairing outcast, hating and hated. He has a strong and mighty brother, Ijim, and an oppressed and desolate brother, Zazel; both of them now at last despising him. After a Babel of anathemas, denunciations, and eyeless gropings, Tiriël also expires, and the poem closes.

Of the published, or rather engraved and purchasable, Prophetic Books, the earliest is *The Book of Thel* (1789), shorter and more idyllic than others, quasi-rhythmical, and not difficult to follow in its general scope and particular evolution.



gh there are various details likely to give the  
er pause: it is reproduced in our volume.  
*Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790) is a mag-  
est work, and may be counted the very  
est monument of Blake's genius as a writer.  
in the highest degree startling, and demands  
ful thinking on the reader's part: if this is  
rded, it can be understood and laid to heart.  
chief subject-matter is the nature of good and  
(with reference to which a short passage has  
extracted at our p. lxxxvi.), and their reciproc-  
necessity. Though permeated with poetic fire  
energy, the work is undisguisedly in prose.  
*Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (1793) prom-  
ns the vigorous and "emancipated" views  
h Blake entertained on questions of sexual  
ion. This book, and those which remain to  
entioned, are not exactly prose, nor yet ex-  
t poetry, so far as the form of the composition  
ncerned. They are written in a rhapsodical  
oil of thought and of imagery, which finds its  
fitting expression in measures not meted  
rolling and semi-rhythmical, often moreover  
ed with gratuitous and troublesome disregard  
metrical sequence, doing less than justice to the  
d of the words. They surge on, overlapping  
ense and the reader's faculty of analytical at-  
on, flecked here and there with resonances and  
rences. This way of writing conformed in  
degree to the Ossian type, but of course with  
more volume of sound, corresponding to its  
ation, if also its shadowiness and sometimes  
flation, of motive. Blake himself, in some  
tory words to the *Jerusalem*, has characterized  
orm of it as follows:—

“When this verse was first dictated to me, I considered a monotonous cadence (like that used by Milton and Shakspeare, and all writers of English blank verse, derived from the modern bondage of rhyming) to be a necessary and indispensable part of the verse. But I soon found that, in the mouth of a true orator, such monotony was not only awkward, but as much a bondage as rhyme itself. I therefore have produced a variety in every line, both in cadence and number of syllables. Every word and every letter is studied, and put into its place. The terrific numbers are reserved for the terrific parts, the mild and gentle for the mild and gentle parts, and the prosaic for inferior parts : all are necessary to each other.”

*America, Europe, Africa, and Asia* (the *Song of Los*)—produced from 1793 to 1795—are entitled “Prophecies ;” not so much that they profess to foreshadow future events as that they present a stupendous panorama contemplated by a mystic in vision. *The Book of Urizen*, followed by *The Book of Ahania* (1794-95), derives more particularly from the theological side of Blake’s mind—his conceptions regarding the Creator, as distinct from the Supreme Benevolence ; Urizen himself being by far the greatest dramatic imagination which Blake has attained to or bequeathed to us, and in a certain way really potent and taking despotic possession of the mind. He represents the “jealous God” of the Old Testament, as reinterpreted by the seer into a different range of religious ideas. *Jerusalem, the Emanation of the Giant Albion* (1804), differs considerably from the earlier Prophetic Books, both in subject and in manner, although referable to the same general

fount of inspiration. It is no doubt adverted to in the following very impressive passage from the *Descriptive Catalogue*, and the battered and panting commentator cannot hope to put the matter much more clearly. "The Strong Man represents the human sublime; the Beautiful Man represents the human pathetic, which was, in the wars of Eden, divided into male and female; the Ugly Man represents the human reason. They were originally one man, who was fourfold: he was self-divided, and his real humanity slain on the stems of generation, and the form of the fourth was like the Son of God. How he became divided is a subject of great sublimity and pathos. The artist has written it under inspiration, and will, if God please, publish it: it is voluminous, and contains the ancient history of Britain, and the world of Satan and of Adam. The Giant Albion was Patriarch of the Atlantic: he is the Atlas of the Greeks,—one of those the Greeks called Titans." And elsewhere: "Albion our ancestor, Patriarch of the Atlantic Continent, whose history preceded that of the Hebrews, and in whose sleep, or chaos, creation began. . . . Imagination is surrounded by the Daughters of Inspiration, who, in the aggregate, are called Jerusalem." A few words of further characterization may be borrowed from Mr. Swinburne. "The enormous *Jerusalem* is simply a fervent apocalyptic discourse on the old subjects,—love without law and against law; virtue that stagnates into poisonous dead matter by moral isolation; sin that must exist for the sake of being forgiven, forgiveness that must always keep up with sin,—must even maintain sin, that it may have something to keep up with

and to live for. Without forgiveness of sins, it one thing necessary, we lapse each man into separate self-righteousness, and a cruel worship of natural morality and religious law. For Nature (oddly enough, as it seems at first sight) is assumed by this mystical code to be the cruellest and narrowest of absolute moralists. Only by worship of imaginative impulse, the grace of the Lamb of God, which admits infinite indulgence in sin, and infinite forgiveness of sin—only by some such faith as this shall the world be renewed and redeemed.” But Mr. Swinburne cautions the possible (I will not say the probable) reader against so much as essaying to understand some parts of the plan of the *Jerusalem*. “Neither let any attempt to plant a human foot upon the soil of the newly-divided shires and counties, partitioned though they be into the mystic likeness of the twelve tribes of Israel. Nor let any questioner of arithmetical mind apply his skill in numbers to the finding of flaws or products in the twelves, twenty-fours, and twenty-sevens, which make up the sum of their male and female Emanations.” The poem named *Milton* (1804) reveals various *arcana* on the like moral and other subjects; among them (to quote again from Mr. Swinburne) “the incarnation, and descent into earth and hell, of Milton—who represents here the redemption by inspiration, working in pain and difficulty before the expiration of the six thousand years” (*i. e.*, the period of mundane existence according to Mosaic chronology). The only remaining and very brief Prophetic Book, *The Ghost of Abel* (published in 1822), takes a dramatic form, once more enforcing the doctrine of

the forgiveness of sins. The inscription which precedes it may be given here,—both as a compendious example of the union of quaintness, profundity, and mysticism, which the Prophetic Books exhibit, and as reminding us of the long lapse of time during which the great-souled Blake wrote on, and found next to no listeners—from a date preceding the first volume of Cowper to a date only two years before the death of Byron.

“To Lord Byron in the Wilderness.—What dost thou here,  
Elijah?  
Can a poet doubt the visions of Jehovah?  
Nature has no outline, but Imagination has:  
Nature has no time, but Imagination has:  
Nature has no supernatural, and dissolves: Imagination is  
Eternity.”

#### 6.—EDITORIAL DETAILS.

The Prophetic Books, at which we have now given a hasty and half-shuddering glance, are excluded from the present edition of Blake's poems; exception being made in favour of *Tiriel*, and of *The Book of Thel*, as already mentioned. Our collection professes to give only the lyrical poems, and two or three others naturally associated with them; whereas the Prophetic Books are not exactly poems at all in point of form, and are certainly not lyrical poems. It would nevertheless be highly desirable that these books, now practically inaccessible, should be republished one day in ordinary book-shape; Blake will be but imperfectly known even to his enthusiasts until this is done. The series should include *The French Revolution*, and should be completed by

the addition of two works, one of which has never yet got beyond the MS. stage of existence:—1. *Vala, or the Death and Judgment of the Ancient Man, a Dream of Nine Nights*, which Mr. Linnell possesses, but which perhaps no human being ever read: 2. *Outhoun*, which appears to have really existed as an engraved and illustrated book, but which remains as yet totally untraceable.

With the exception of this very extraordinary—and in candour it must be added very unreadable—series of works, our edition presents the whole body of Blake's poetry.<sup>1</sup> It includes the *Poetical Sketches*; the *Songs of Innocence* and of *Experience*; *TheL*; *Tiriell*; the verses thinly scattered among other books written by Blake, or in his correspondence; the miscellaneous poems that were first published in Mr. Gilchrist's book, and afterwards (by Mr. Pickering) partly reproduced, following an edition of the *Innocence and Experience*,—the majority of these miscellaneous compositions coming from the MS. book that belongs to Mr. D. G. Rossetti, and the remainder from another MS.; and finally various poems, also from Mr. Rossetti's MS. book, that had as yet not been published at all, or at any rate not in full. Of the chief of these, *The Everlasting Gospel*, all but a few lines appear—but not as a continuous unbroken composition—in Mr. Swinburne's book:

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<sup>1</sup> Or, in literal strictness, the whole body of it except three compositions, omitted here on grounds of copyright. These are (1) a sort of grotesque ballad named *Long John Brown and Little Mary Bell*, in all respects an unregrettable item; and (2 and 3) two slight songs, *By a Shepherd*, and *By an Old Shepherd*.

had been omitted from Mr. Gilchrist's, as being of sufficient value or substance to be in that selection of Blake's best things. In the present complete edition, however, it seems reasonable to include them, as they are, in judgment, good enough or curious enough for preservation. There are still some others in the MS. book which, for one reason or another, are not inserted here,—mostly because they are, for the most part, scrappy, unfinished jottings, not to be considered, even by lax indulgence, among the specimens that can represent Blake to the present and future generations of readers. One of these, entitled *The Marriage Ring*, has been printed by Mr. Swinburne: to me it appears a performance of too much tenuity and caprice for reproduction. The same gentleman has given a second specimen of a previously unpublished scrap, from a different MS., beginning

“ A fairy leapt upon my knee : ”

which I also omit, for a like reason. Another specimen of the compositions that I miss out from the present edition is the epigram on Hayley quoted on p. xciii. of the present memoir. As a poem, it is not worthy of preservation; but it has its use in the way of elucidating Blake's mental peculiarities.

In reproducing the *Poetical Sketches* in the present volume, I have followed the reprint which was published by Mr. Pickering in 1868, under the patronage of Mr. R. H. Shepherd. I thus forego the numerous emendations which were introduced by Mr. Shepherd into that earlier reprint which appears in Mr. Gilchrist's book, vol. 2, of some selected



poems from the same series. These emendations were indeed great improvements, and they rectify various annoying and inexcusable laxities in point of metre or syntax, or here and there of expression. It is therefore with considerable reluctance that I abandon them, and do Blake the disservice of again presenting him without their aid. My brother felt that he could introduce them (as observed in his prefatory note) "without once in the slightest degree affecting the originality of the text": nor do I intend to express here any opinion to the contrary effect. There is, however, I conceive, a certain degree of difference between the treatment which may be legitimately applied to extracted poems reprinted for the first time, and serving partly to illustrate and adorn a biographical record, and the same poems when they form a portion of an edition of the author's works, simply as such. At any rate, as the compositions in question have been already reproduced at a date intermediate between that of my brother's edition and of the present volume, and were then printed in their original shape (which term includes their occasional original shapelessness), I have not felt justified in recurring to another form of the same poems, which, if better, as it assuredly is, is also less absolutely exact.

Let me but hope that Blake's spirit, if conscious of what is here being done for the maintenance of his name and fame, would not resent this damaging adherence to authenticity. Blake at times (as we may remember), when limning his visionary sitters, had to exclaim, "He frowns—he is displeas'd with my portrait of him." He in his turn might now perchance frown and be

displeased at finding that the present re-issue of the *Poetical Sketches* furnishes a "portrait" of himself—a reflex of his "spiritual form"—less advantageous than another which is already current among readers and admirers of his work. But I am fain to hope the reverse; with which trust, and the preceding faint elucidations, I commit to public regard this first collected edition of Blake's Lyrical Poems.

W. M. ROSSETTI.







P O E M S.





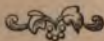


## POETICAL SKETCHES

### ADVERTISEMENT.

**T**HE following Sketches were the production of untutored youth, commenced in his twelfth, and occasionally resumed by the author till his twentieth year; which time, his talents having been wholly unimproved to the attainment of excellence in his profession, he has been deprived of the leisure requisite to such a revisal of these sheets as might have rendered them less unfit to meet the eye.

Aware of the irregularities and defects to be met in almost every page, his friends have still believed that they possessed a poetical originality which merited some respite from oblivion. These opinions remain, however, to be now reprobated and confirmed by a less partial public.







beam forth lustre on a darkling world,  
 as large as we advance: and some perhaps  
 most obscure at home, that scarce were seen  
 winkle in their sphere, may so advance  
 the astonished world, with upturned eyes,  
 regardless of the moon, and those that once were  
 bright,  
 did only for to gaze upon their splendour.

[*He here knights the Prince and other  
 young Nobles.*]

Let us take a just revenge for those  
 the Lords who fell beneath the bloody axe  
 of Paris. Thanks, noble Harcourt, for 'twas  
 your advice we landed here in Brittany,  
 a country not yet sown with destruction,  
 where the fiery whirlwind of swift war  
 not yet swept its desolating wing.—  
 Three parties we divide by day,  
 separate march, but join again at night:  
 each knows his rank, and Heaven marshal all.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE.—*English Court.*

KING EDWARD, DUKE OF CLARENCE, QUEEN PHILIPPA,  
 Lords, Bishop, &c.

CLARENCE.

**W**HY Lords, I have by the advice of her  
 Whom I am doubly bound to obey, my  
 parent  
 my sovereign, called you together.



A gain but scanty fare. Then, my dear Lord,  
 England's trade our care; and we, as trades-  
 men  
 looking to the gain of this our native land.

## CLARENCE.

My good Lord, true wisdom drops like honey  
 from your tongue, as from a worshiped oak!  
 Forgive, my Lords, my talkative youth, that speaks  
 not merely what my narrow observation has  
 picked up, but what I have concluded from your  
 lessons.

Now, by the Queen's advice, I ask your leave  
 to dine to-morrow with the Mayor of London:  
 If I obtain your leave, I have another boon  
 to ask, which is the favour of your company.  
 I fear Lord Percy will not give me leave.

## PERCY.

My dear Sir, a prince should always keep his state,  
 and grant his favours with a sparing hand,  
 for they are never rightly valued.  
 These are my thoughts: yet it were best to go:  
 to keep a proper dignity, for now  
 to represent the sacred person of  
 your father; 'tis with princes as 'tis with the sun;  
 not sometimes o'erclouded, we grow weary  
 of his officious glory.

## CLARENCE.

When you will give me leave to shine sometimes,  
 my Lord?

LORD (*aside*).

Thou hast a gallant spirit, which I fear  
Will be imposed on by the closer sort.

CLARENCE.

Well, I'll endeavour to take  
Lord Percy's advice ; I have been used so much  
To dignity that I'm sick on't.

QUEEN PHILIPPA.

Fie, fie, Lord Clarence ! you proceed not to business,  
But speak of your own pleasures.  
I hope their lordships will excuse your giddiness.

CLARENCE.

My Lords, the French have fitted out many  
Small ships of war that, like to ravening wolves,  
Infest our English seas, devouring all  
Our burdened vessels, spoiling our naval flocks.  
The merchants do complain, and beg our aid.

PERCY.

The merchants are rich enough ;  
Can they not help themselves ?

BISHOP.

They can, and may ; but how to gain their will  
Requires our countenance and help.

PERCY.

When that they find they must, my Lord, they will :  
Let them but suffer awhile, and you shall see  
They will bestir themselves.

## BISHOP.

Lord Percy cannot mean that we should suffer  
This disgrace. If so, we are not sovereigns  
Of the sea,—our right, that Heaven gave  
To England, when at the birth of Nature  
She was seated in the deep ; the Ocean ceased  
His mighty roar, and, fawning, played around  
Her snowy feet, and owned his awful Queen.  
Lord Percy, if the heart is sick, the head  
Must be aggrieved ; if but one member suffer,  
The heart doth fail. You say, my Lord, the  
    merchants  
Can, if they will, defend themselves against  
These rovers : this is a noble scheme,  
Worthy the brave Lord Percy, and as worthy  
His generous aid to put it into practice.

## PERCY.

Lord Bishop, what was rash in me is wise  
In you ; I dare not own the plan. 'Tis not  
Mine. Yet will I, if you please,  
Quickly to the Lord Mayor, and work him onward  
To this most glorious voyage ; on which cast  
I'll set my whole estate,  
But we will bring these Gallic rovers under.

## QUEEN PHILIPPA.

Thanks, brave Lord Percy ; you have the thanks  
Of England's Queen, and will, ere long, of England.  
[*Exeunt.*]

AUDLEY.

And this, Sir Thomas, you call fear? Your fe  
Is of a different kind then from the King's;  
He fears to turn his face, and you to turn y  
back.

I do not think, Sir Thomas, you know what fea

*Enter* SIR JOHN CHANDOS.

CHANDOS.

Good-morrow, Generals; I give you joy:  
Welcome to the fields of Cressy. Here we st  
And wait for Philip.

DAGWORTH.

I hope so.

AUDLEY.

There, Sir Thomas; do you call that fear?

DAGWORTH.

I don't know; perhaps he takes it by fits.  
Why, noble Chandos, look you here—  
One rotten sheep spoils the whole flock;  
And if the bell-wether is tainted, I wish  
The Prince may not catch the distemper too.

CHANDOS.

Distemper, Sir Thomas! what distemper?  
I have not heard.

DAGWORTH.

Why, Chandos, you are a wise man,

I know you understand me ; a distemper  
The King caught here in France of running away.

AUDLEY.

Sir Thomas, you say you have caught it too.

DAGWORTH.

And so will the whole army ; 'tis very catching,  
For, when the coward runs, the brave man totters.  
Perhaps the air of the country is the cause.  
I feel it coming upon me, so I strive against it ;  
You yet are whole ; but, after a few more  
Retreats, we all shall know how to retreat  
Better than fight.—To be plain, I think retreating  
Too often takes away a soldier's courage.

CHANDOS.

Here comes the King himself : tell him your  
thoughts  
Plainly, Sir Thomas.

DAGWORTH.

I've told him before, but his disorder  
Makes him deaf.

*Enter KING EDWARD and BLACK PRINCE.*

KING.

Good-morrow, Generals ; when English courage  
fails,  
Down goes our right to France.  
But we are conquerors everywhere ; nothing  
Can stand our soldiers ; each man is worthy

Of a triumph. Such an army of heroes  
 Ne'er shouted to the heavens, nor shook the field  
 Edward, my son, thou art  
 Most happy, having such command: the man  
 Were base who were not fired to deeds  
 Above heroic, having such examples.

## PRINCE.

Sire, with respect and deference I look  
 Upon such noble souls, and wish myself  
 Worthy the high command that Heaven and you  
 Have given me. When I have seen the field gl  
 And in each countenance the soul of war  
 Curbed by the manliest reason, I have been win  
 With certain victory; and 'tis my boast,  
 And shall be still my glory, I was inspired  
 By these brave troops.

## DAGWORTH.

Your Grace had better make th  
 All Generals.

## KING.

Sir Thomas Dagworth, you must have your jol  
 And shall, while you can fight as you did at  
 The Ford.

## DAGWORTH.

I have a small petition to your Majesty.

## KING.

What can Sir Thomas Dagworth ask  
 That Edward can refuse?



## DAGWORTH.

*I hope your Majesty cannot refuse so great  
A trifle; I've gilt your cause with my best blood,  
And would again, were I not forbid  
By him whom I am bound to obey: my hands  
Are tied up, my courage shrunk and withered,  
My sinews slackened, and my voice scarce heard;  
Therefore I beg I may return to England.*

## KING.

I know not what you could have asked, Sir Thomas,  
That I would not have sooner parted with  
Than such a soldier as you have been, and such a  
friend:  
Nay, I will know the most remote particulars  
Of this your strange petition; that, if I can,  
I still may keep you here.

## DAGWORTH.

Here on the fields of Cressy we are settled  
Till Philip springs the timorous covey again.  
The wolf is hunted down by causeless fear;  
The lion flees, and fear usurps his heart,  
Startled, astonished at the clamorous cock;  
The eagle, that doth gaze upon the sun,  
Fears the small fire that plays about the fen.  
If, at this moment of their idle fear,  
The dog doth seize the wolf, the forester the lion,  
The negro in the crevice of the rock  
Doth seize the soaring eagle; undone by flight,  
They tame submit: such the effect flight has  
On noble souls. Now hear its opposite:

The timorous stag starts from the thicket wild,  
 The fearful crane springs from the splashy fen,  
 The shining snake glides o'er the bending grass,  
 The stag turns head, and bays the crying hounds;  
 The crane o'ertaken fighteth with the hawk;  
 The snake doth turn, and bite the padding foot.  
 And if your Majesty's afraid of Philip,  
 You are more like a lion than a crane:  
 Therefore I beg I may return to England.

KING.

Sir Thomas, now I understand your mirth,  
 Which often plays with wisdom for its pastime,  
 And brings good counsel from the breast of laughter.  
 I hope you'll stay and see us fight this battle,  
 And reap rich harvest in the fields of Cressy;  
 Then go to England, tell them how we fight,  
 And set all hearts on fire to be with us.  
 Philip is plumed, and thinks we flee from him,  
 Else he would never dare to attack us. Now,  
 Now the quarry's set! and Death doth sport  
 In the bright sunshine of this fatal day.

DAGWORTH.

Now my heart dances, and I am as light  
 As the young bridegroom going to be married.  
 Now must I to my soldiers, get them ready,  
 Furbish our armours bright, new-plume our helmets;  
 And we will sing like the young housewives busied  
 In the dairy. My feet are wing'd, but not  
 For flight, an please your grace.

KING.

If all my soldiers are as pleased as you,

Will be a gallant thing to fight or die ;  
 When I can never be afraid of Philip.

## DAGWORTH.

A raw-boned fellow t'other day passed by me ;  
 Told him to put off his hungry looks—  
 He answered me, " I hunger for another battle."  
 I saw a little Welshman with a fiery face ;  
 Told him he looked like a candle half  
 Burned out ; he answered, he was "*pig* enough  
 To light another *pattle*." Last night, beneath  
 The moon I walked abroad, when all had pitched  
 Their tents, and all were still ;  
 I heard a blooming youth singing a song  
 He had composed, and at each pause he wiped  
 His dropping eyes. The ditty was, " If he  
 Returned victorious, he should wed a maiden  
 Fairer than snow, and rich as midsummer."  
 Another wept, and wished health to his father.  
 He hid them both, but gave them noble hopes.  
 These are the minds that glory in the battle,  
 And leap and dance to hear the trumpet sound.

## KING.

For Thomas Dagworth, be thou near our person ;  
 Thy heart is richer than the vales of France :  
 I will not part with such a man as thee.  
 Philip came armed in the ribs of death,  
 And shook his mortal dart against my head,  
 Thou'dst laugh his fury into nerveless shame !  
 Now, for thou art suited to the work,  
 Throughout the camp ; inflame the timorous,  
 Blow up the sluggish into ardour, and

Confirm the strong with strength, the weak inspire,  
 And wing their brows with hope and expectation;  
 Then to our tent return, and meet to council.

[*Exit DAGWORTH.*]

CHANDOS.

That man's a hero in his closet, and more  
 A hero to the servants of his house  
 Than to the gaping world; he carries windows  
 In that enlarged breast of his, that all  
 May see what's done within.

PRINCE.

He is a genuine Englishman, my Chandos,  
 And hath the spirit of Liberty within him.  
 Forgive my prejudice, Sir John; I think  
 My Englishmen the bravest people on  
 The face of the earth.

CHANDOS.

Courage, my Lord, proceeds from self-dependence.  
 Teach man to think he's a free agent,  
 Give but a slave his liberty, he'll shake  
 Off sloth, and build himself a hut, and hedge  
 A spot of ground; this he'll defend; 'tis his  
 By right of Nature. Thus set in action,  
 He will still move onward to plan conveniences,  
 Till glory fires his breast to enlarge his castle;  
 While the poor slave drudges all day, in hope  
 To rest at night.

KING.

O Liberty, how glorious art thou!

ee thee hovering o'er my army, with  
 y wide-stretched plumes; I see thee  
 ad them on to battle;  
 see thee blow thy golden trumpet while  
 y sons shout the strong shout of victory!  
 noble Chandos, think thyself a gardener,  
 y son a vine, which I commit unto  
 hy care. Prune all extravagant shoots, and guide  
 he ambitious tendrils in the path of wisdom;  
 Water him with thy advice, and Heaven  
 ain freshening dew upon his branches! And,  
 Edward, my dear son! learn to think lowly of  
 thyself, as we may all each prefer other—  
 'tis the best policy, and 'tis our duty.

[*Exit* KING EDWARD.]

PRINCE.

And may our duty, Chandos, be our pleasure.—  
 Now we are alone, Sir John, I will unburden  
 And breathe my hopes into the burning air,  
 Where thousand Deaths are posting up and down,  
 Commissioned to this fatal field of Cressy.  
 Methinks I see them arm my gallant soldiers,  
 And gird the sword upon each thigh, and fit  
 Each shining helm, and string each stubborn bow,  
 And dance to the neighing of our steeds.  
 Methinks the shout begins, the battle burns;  
 Methinks I see them perch on English crests,  
 And roar the wild flame of fierce war upon  
 The throngèd enemy! In truth, I am too full;  
 't is my sin to love the noise of war.  
 Chandos, thou seest my weakness; strong Nature  
 Will bend or break us; my blood, like a springtide

Does rise so high to overflow all bounds  
 Of moderation ; while Reason, in her frail bark,  
 Can see no shore or bound for vast ambition.  
 Come, take the helm, my Chandos,  
 That my full-blown sails overset me not  
 In the wild tempest. Condemn my venturous youth  
 That plays with danger, as the innocent child,  
 Unthinking, plays upon the viper's den :  
 I am a coward in my reason, Chandos.

## CHANDOS.

You are a man, my prince, and a brave man,  
 If I can judge of actions ; but your heat  
 Is the effect of youth, and want of use :  
 Use makes the armèd field and noisy war  
 Pass over as a summer cloud, unregarded,  
 Or but expected as a thing of course.  
 Age is contemplative ; each rolling year  
 Brings forth fruit to the mind's treasure-house :—  
 While vacant youth doth crave and seek about  
 Within itself, and findeth discontent,  
 Then, tired of thought, impatient takes the wing  
 Seizes the fruits of time, attacks experience,  
 Roams round vast Nature's forest, where no bound  
 Are set, the swiftest may have room, the stronges  
 Find prey ; till, tired at length, sated and tired  
 With the changing sameness, old variety,  
 We sit us down, and view our former joys  
 With distaste and dislike.

## PRINCE.

Then, if we must tug for experience,  
 Let us not fear to beat round Nature's wilds,  
 And rouse the strongest prey : then if we fall,

We fall with glory. I know the wolf  
 Is dangerous to fight, not good for food,  
 Nor is the hide a comely vestment; so  
 We have our battle for our pains. I know  
 That youth has need of age to point fit prey,  
 And oft the stander-by shall steal the fruit  
 Of the other's labour. This is philosophy;  
 These are the tricks of the world; but the pure soul  
 Shall mount on native wings, disdain little sport,  
 And cut a path into the heaven of glory,  
 Leaving a track of light for men to wonder at.  
 I'm glad my father does not hear me talk;  
 You can find friendly excuses for me, Chandos.  
 But do you not think, Sir John, that, if it please  
 The Almighty to stretch out my span of life,  
 I shall with pleasure view a glorious action  
 Which my youth mastered?

## CHANDOS.

Considerate age, my Lord, views motives,  
 And not acts; when neither warbling voice  
 Nor trilling pipe is heard, nor pleasure sits  
 With trembling age, the voice of Conscience then,  
 Sweeter than music in a summer's eve,  
 Shall warble round the snowy head, and keep  
 Sweet symphony to feathered angels, sitting  
 As guardians round your chair; then shall the pulse  
 Beat slow, and taste and touch and sight and sound  
 and smell,  
 That sing and dance round Reason's fine-wrought  
 throne,  
 Shall flee away, and leave him all forlorn;  
 Yet not forlorn if Conscience is his friend.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE.—*In SIR THOMAS DAGWORTH'S Tent.*

DAGWORTH, and WILLIAM *his man.*

DAGWORTH.

**B**RING hither my armour, William.  
Ambition is the growth of every clime.

WILLIAM.

Does it grow in England, sir ?

DAGWORTH.

Ay, it grows most in lands most cultivated.

WILLIAM.

Then it grows most in France ; the vines here  
Are finer than any we have in England.

DAGWORTH.

Ay, but the oaks are not.

WILLIAM.

What is the tree you mentioned ? I don't think  
I ever saw it.

DAGWORTH.

Ambition.

WILLIAM.

Is it a little creeping root that grows in ditches ?



DAGWORTH.

Thou dost not understand me, William.  
It is a root that grows in every breast ;  
Ambition is the desire or passion that one man  
Has to get before another, in any pursuit after  
glory ;  
But I don't think you have any of it.

WILLIAM.

Yes, I have ; I have a great ambition to know  
everything, sir.

DAGWORTH.

But, when our first ideas are wrong, what follows  
must all be wrong, of course ; 'tis best to know a  
little, and to know that little aright.

WILLIAM.

Then, sir, I should be glad to know if it was  
not ambition that brought over our king to France  
to fight for his right.

DAGWORTH.

Though the knowledge of that will not profit  
thee much, yet I will tell you that it *was* ambition.

WILLIAM.

Then, if ambition is a sin, we are all guilty in  
coming with him, and in fighting for him.

DAGWORTH.

Now, William, thou dost thrust the question  
home ; but I must tell you that, guilt being an

act of the mind, none are guilty but those whose minds are prompted by that same ambition.

WILLIAM.

Now, I always thought that a man might be guilty of doing wrong without knowing it was wrong.

DAGWORTH.

Thou art a natural philosopher, and knowest truth by instinct ; while reason runs aground, as we have run our argument. Only remember, William, all have it in their power to know the motives of their own actions, and 'tis a sin to act without some reason.

WILLIAM.

And whoever acts without reason may do a great deal of harm without knowing it.

DAGWORTH.

Thou art an endless moralist.

WILLIAM.

Now there's a story come into my head, that I will tell your honour, if you'll give me leave.

DAGWORTH.

No, William, save it till another time ; this is no time for story-telling. But here comes one who is as entertaining as a good story.

*Enter* PETER BLUNT.

PETER.

Yonder's a musician going to play before the King; it's a new song about the French and English. And the Prince has made the minstrel aquire, and given him I don't know what, and I can't tell whether he don't mention us all one by one; and he is to write another about all us that are to die, that we may be remembered in Old England, for all our blood and bones are in France; and a great deal more that we shall all hear by and by. And I came to tell your honour, because you love to hear war-songs.

DAGWORTH.

And who is this minstrel, Peter, dost know?

PETER.

Oh ay, I forgot to tell that; he has got the same name as Sir John Chandos that the Prince is always with—the wise man that knows us all as well as our honour, only ain't so good-natured.

DAGWORTH.

I thank you, Peter, for your information, but not your compliment, which is not true. There's much difference between him and me as between glittering sand and fruitful mould; or shining glass and a wrought diamond, set in rich gold, and fitted to the finger of an Emperor; such is that worthy Chandos.

PETER.

I know your honour does not think anything of yourself, but everybody else does.

DAGWORTH.

Go, Peter, get you gone ; flattery is delicious, even from the lips of a babbler. [*Exit PETER.*]

WILLIAM.

I never flatter your honour.

DAGWORTH.

I don't know that.

WILLIAM.

Why you know, sir, when we were in England, at the tournament at Windsor, and the Earl of Warwick was tumbled over, you asked me if he did not look well when he fell ; and I said no, he looked very foolish ; and you were very angry with me for not flattering you.

DAGWORTH.

You mean that I was angry with you for not flattering the Earl of Warwick. [*Exeunt.*]



SCENE.—*Sir Thomas Dagworth's Tent.*

SIR THOMAS DAGWORTH. *To him enters SIR  
WALTER MANNY.*

SIR WALTER.

**S**IR THOMAS DAGWORTH, I have been  
weeping  
Over the men that are to die to-day.

DAGWORTH.

Why, brave Sir Walter, you or I may fall.

SIR WALTER.

I know this breathing flesh must lie and rot,  
Covered with silence and forgetfulness.  
Death roams in cities' smoke, and in still night,  
When men sleep in their beds, walketh about.  
How many in walled cities lie and groan,  
Turning themselves upon their beds,  
Talking with Death, answering his hard demands!  
How many walk in darkness, terrors are round  
The curtains of their beds, destruction is  
Ready at the door! How many sleep  
In earth, covered with stones and deathly dust,  
Resting in quietness, whose spirits walk  
Upon the clouds of heaven, to die no more!  
Yet death is terrible, though borne on angels'  
wings.

How terrible then is the field of death,  
Where he doth rend the vault of heaven,

And shake the gates of hell !  
O Dagworth, France is sick ! the very sky,  
Though sunshine light it, seems to me as pale  
As the pale fainting man on his death-bed,  
Whose face is shown by light of sickly taper.  
It makes me sad and sick at very heart ;  
Thousands must fall to-day.

## DAGWORTH.

Thousands of souls must leave this prison-house,  
To be exalted to those heavenly fields  
Where songs of triumph, palms of victory,  
Where peace and joy and love and calm content,  
Sit singing in the azure clouds, and strew  
Flowers of heaven's growth over the banquet-table.  
Bind ardent hope upon your feet like shoes,  
Put on the robe of preparation !  
The table is prepared in shining heaven,  
The flowers of immortality are blown ;  
Let those that fight fight in good stedfastness,  
And those that fall shall rise in victory.

## SIR WALTER.

I've often seen the burning field of war,  
And often heard the dismal clang of arms ;  
But never, till this fatal day of Cressy,  
Has my soul fainted with these views of death.  
I seem to be in one great charnel-house,  
And seem to scent the rotten carcasses ;  
I seem to hear the dismal yells of Death,  
While the black gore drops from his horrid jaws :  
Yet I not fear the monster in his pride—  
But oh ! the souls that are to die to-day !

## DAGWORTH.


op, brave Sir Walter ; let me drop a tear,  
 en let the clarion of war begin ;  
 l fight and weep, 'tis in my country's cause ;  
 l weep and shout for glorious liberty.  
 im War shall laugh and shout, decked in tears,  
 nd blood shall flow like streams across the  
     meadows,  
 at murmur down their pebbly channels, and  
 end their sweet lives to do their country service :  
 en shall England's verdure shoot, her fields shall  
     smile,  
 er ships shall sing across the foaming sea,  
 er mariners shall use the flute and viol,  
 nd rattling guns, and black and dreary war,  
 all be no more.

## SIR WALTER.

ell, let the trumpet sound, and the drum beat ;  
 t war stain the blue heavens with bloody banners ;  
 l draw my sword, nor ever sheathe it up  
 ll England blow the trump of victory,  
 I lie stretched upon the field of death. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE.—*In the Camp.*

*Several of the Warriors met at the King's Tent with  
 a Minstrel, who sings the following Song :*


 SONS of Trojan Brutus, clothed in war,  
 Whose voices are the thunder of the field,  
 Rolling dark clouds o'er France, muffling  
     the sun  
 sickly darkness like a dim eclipse,

“ Liberty shall stand upon the cliffs of Albion,  
 Casting her blue eyes over the green ocean ;  
 Or towering stand upon the roaring waves,  
 Stretching her mighty spear o'er distant lands ;  
 While with her eagle wings she covereth  
 Fair Albion's shore, and all her families.”

### PROLOGUE

INTENDED FOR A DRAMATIC PIECE OF KING  
 EDWARD THE FOURTH.



**H** for a voice like thunder, and a tongue  
 To drown the throat of war ! When  
                   the senses  
 Are shaken, and the soul is driven to  
                   madness,  
 Who can stand ? When the souls of the oppressed  
 Fight in the troubled air that rages, who can stand ?  
 When the whirlwind of fury comes from the throne  
 Of God, when the frowns of His countenance  
 Drive the nations together, who can stand ?  
 When Sin claps his broad wings over the battle,  
 And sails rejoicing in the flood of death ;  
 When souls are torn to everlasting fire,  
 And fiends of hell rejoice upon the slain,  
 Oh who can stand ? Oh who hath caused this ?  
 Oh who can answer at the throne of God ?  
 The Kings and Nobles of the land have done it !  
 Hear it not, Heaven, thy ministers have done it !



PROLOGUE TO KING JOHN.<sup>1</sup>

**J**USTICE hath heaved a sword to plunge  
 in Albion's breast ;  
 For Albion's sins are crimson-dyed,  
 And the red scourge follows her desolate  
 sons.

1 Patriot rose ; full oft did Patriot rise,  
 n Tyranny hath stained fair Albion's breast  
 i her own children's gore.  
 d his majestic feet deep thunders roll ;  
 heart does tremble, and each knee grows slack.  
 stars of heaven tremble ; the roaring voice of  
 war,  
 trumpet, calls to battle. Brother in brother's  
 blood  
 bathe, rivers of death. O land most hapless !  
 auteous island, how forsaken !  
 ) from thy silver fountains, weep from thy  
 gentle rivers !

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<sup>1</sup> Blake's volume this prologue is printed as prose. It seems, however, to be no reason for such a course, as in fact loose blank verse—not at all *more* loose than in other instances. I therefore print this as verse, and in like manner the fragment named *Samson*. Two other pieces, *The Couch of Death* and *Contemplation*, might, with much difficulty, be treated in the same way ; but on the other hand they may rather be regarded as rhapsodic prose, and are therefore omitted here.

The angel of the island weeps ;  
Thy widowed virgins weep beneath thy shade<sup>s</sup> ;  
Thy aged fathers gird themselves for war ;  
The sucking infant lives, to die in battle ;  
The weeping mother feeds him for the slaughter<sup>d</sup> ;  
The husbandman doth leave his bending harvest<sup>t</sup> ;  
Blood cries afar ! The land doth sow itself !  
The glittering youth of courts must gleam in arms ;  
The aged senators their ancient swords assume ;  
The trembling sinews of old age must work  
The work of death against their progeny.  
For Tyranny hath stretched his purple arm,  
And " Blood ! " he cries : " The chariots and the  
horses,  
The noise of shout, and dreadful thunder of the  
battle heard afar ! "

Beware, O proud ! thou shalt be humbled ;  
Thy cruel brow, thine iron heart is smitten,  
Though lingering Fate is slow. Oh yet may Albion  
Smile again, and stretch her peaceful arms,  
And raise her golden head exultingly !  
Her citizens shall throng about her gates,  
Her mariners shall sing upon the sea,  
And myriads shall to her temples crowd !  
Her sons shall joy as in the morning—  
Her daughters sing as to the rising year !



## TO SPRING.

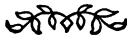


THOU with dewy locks, who lookest  
 down  
 Through the clear windows of the  
 morning, turn  
 Thine angel eyes upon our western isle,  
 Which in full choir hails thy approach, O Spring !

The hills tell each other, and the listening  
 Valleys hear ; all our longing eyes are turned  
 Up to thy bright pavilions : issue forth,  
 And let thy holy feet visit our clime !

Come o'er the eastern hills, and let our winds  
 Kiss thy perfumèd garments ; let us taste  
 Thy morn and evening breath ; scatter thy pearls  
 Upon our lovesick land that mourns for thee.

Oh deck her forth with thy fair fingers ; pour  
 Thy soft kisses on her bosom ; and put  
 Thy golden crown upon her languished head,  
 Whose modest tresses were bound up for thee !



## TO SUMMER.



THOU who passest through our valleys  
 in  
 Thy strength, curb thy fierce steeds,  
 allay the heat  
 That flames from their large nostrils ! Thou, O  
 Summer,  
 Oft pitchedst here thy golden tent, and oft  
 Beneath our oaks hast slept, while we beheld  
 With joy thy ruddy limbs and flourishing hair.

Beneath our thickest shades we oft have heard  
 Thy voice, when Noon upon his fervid car  
 Rode o'er the deep of heaven. Beside our springs  
 Sit down, and in our mossy valleys, on  
 Some bank beside a river clear, throw thy  
 Silk draperies off, and rush into the stream !  
 Our valleys love the Summer in his pride.

Our bards are famed who strike the silver wire :  
 Our youth are bolder than the southern swains,  
 Our maidens fairer in the sprightly dance.  
 We lack not songs, nor instruments of joy,  
 Nor echoes sweet, nor waters clear as heaven,  
 Nor laurel wreaths against the sultry heat.



## TO AUTUMN.



AUTUMN, laden with fruit, and stained  
With the blood of the grape, pass not,  
but sit

Beneath my shady roof; there thou  
mayst rest,

And tune thy jolly voice to my fresh pipe,  
And all the daughters of the year shall dance!  
Sing now the lusty song of fruits and flowers.

“ The narrow bud opens her beauties to  
The sun, and love runs in her thrilling veins;  
Blossoms hang round the brows of Morning, and  
Flourish down the bright cheek of modest Eve,  
Till clustering Summer breaks forth into singing,  
And feathered clouds strew flowers round her head.

“ The Spirits of the Air live on the smells  
Of fruit; and Joy, with pinions light, roves round  
The gardens, or sits singing in the trees.”  
Thus sang the jolly Autumn as he sat;  
Then rose, girded himself, and o’er the bleak  
Hills fled from our sight; but left his golden load.



## TO WINTER.



WINTER! bar thine adamantine doors:  
 The north is thine; there hast thou  
 built thy dark  
 Deep-founded habitation. Shake not  
 thy roofs,

Nor bend thy pillars with thine iron car.

He hears me not, but o'er the yawning deep  
 Rides heavy; his storms are unchained, sheathed  
 In ribbed steel; I dare not lift mine eyes;  
 For he hath reared his sceptre o'er the world.

Lo! now the direful monster, whose skin clings  
 To his strong bones, strides o'er the groaning rocks:  
 He withers all in silence, and in his hand  
 Unclothes the earth, and freezes up frail life.

He takes his seat upon the cliffs,—the mariner  
 Cries in vain. Poor little wretch, that deal'st  
 With storms!—till heaven smiles, and the monster  
 Is driven yelling to his caves beneath Mount Hecla.

## TO THE EVENING STAR.



THOU fair-haired Angel of the Evening,  
 Now, whilst the sun rests on the  
 mountains, light  
 Thy bright torch of love—thy radiant  
 crown

Put on, and smile upon our evening bed !  
 Smile on our loves ; and, while thou drawest the  
 Blue curtains of the sky, scatter thy silver dew  
 On every flower that shuts its sweet eyes  
 In timely sleep. Let thy west wind sleep on  
 The lake ; speak silence with thy glimmering eyes,  
 And wash the dusk with silver.—Soon, full soon,  
 Dost thou withdraw ; then the wolf rages wide,  
 And the lion glares through the dun forest.  
 The fleeces of our flocks are covered with  
 Thy sacred dew : protect them with thine influence !

## TO MORNING.



HOLY virgin, clad in purest white,  
 Unlock heaven's golden gates, and issue  
 forth ;  
 Awake the dawn that sleeps in heaven ;  
 let light

Rise from the chambers of the east, and bring  
 The honeyed dew that cometh on waking day.  
 O radiant Morning, salute the Sun,  
 Roused like a huntsman to the chase, and with  
 Thy buskined feet appear upon our hills.



† FAIR ELEANOR.



HE bell struck one, and shook the silent  
tower ;

The graves give up their dead : fair  
Eleanor

Walked by the castle-gate, and lookèd in :  
A hollow groan ran through the dreary vaults.

She shrieked aloud, and sunk upon the steps,  
On the cold stone her pale cheek. Sickly smells  
Of death issue as from a sepulchre,  
And all is silent but the sighing vaults.

Chill Death withdraws his hand, and she revives ;  
Amazed she finds herself upon her feet,  
And, like a ghost, through narrow passages  
Walking, feeling the cold walls with her hands.

Fancy returns, and now she thinks of bones  
And grinning skulls, and corruptible death  
Wrapt in his shroud ; and now fancies she hears  
Deep sighs, and sees pale sickly ghosts gliding.

At length, no fancy but reality  
Distracts her. A rushing sound, and the feet  
Of one that fled, approaches.—Ellen stood,  
Like a dumb statue, froze to stone with fear.



The wretch approaches, crying: "The deed is done!  
Take this, and send it by whom thou wilt send;  
It is my life—send it to Eleanor:—  
He's dead, and howling after me for blood!

"Take this," he cried; and thrust into her arms  
A wet napkin, wrapt about; then rushed  
Past, howling. She received into her arms  
Pale death, and followed on the wings of fear.

They passed swift through the outer gate; the  
wretch,  
Howling, leaped o'er the wall into the moat,  
Stifling in mud. Fair Ellen passed the bridge,  
And heard a gloomy voice cry "Is it done?"

As the deer wounded, Ellen flew over  
The pathless plain; as the arrows that fly  
By night, destruction flies, and strikes in darkness.  
She fled from fear, till at her house arrived.

Her maids await her; on her bed she falls,  
That bed of joy where erst her lord hath pressed.  
"Ah woman's fear!" she cried, "Ah cursed duke!  
Ah my dear lord! ah wretched Eleanor!

"My lord was like a flower upon the brows  
Of lusty May! Ah life as frail as flower!  
O ghastly Death! withdraw thy cruel hand!  
Seek'st thou that flower to deck thy horrid temples?"

"My lord was like a star in highest heaven  
Drawn down to earth by spells and wickedness;

My lord was like the opening eyes of Day,  
When western winds creep softly o'er the flowers.

" But he is darkened ; like the summer's noon  
Clouded ; fall'n like the stately tree, cut down ;  
The breath of heaven dwelt among his leaves.  
O Eleanor, weak woman, filled with woe !"

Thus having spoke, she raised up her head,  
And saw the bloody napkin by her side,  
Which in her arms she brought ; and now, tenfold  
More terrified, saw it unfold itself.

Her eyes were fixed ; the bloody cloth unfolds,  
Disclosing to her sight the murdered head  
Of her dear lord, all ghastly pale, clotted  
With gory blood ; it groaned, and thus it spake :

" O Eleanor, behold thy husband's head,  
Who, sleeping on the stones of yonder tower,  
Was reft of life by the accursed duke :  
A hired villain turned my sleep to death.

" O Eleanor, beware the cursed duke ;  
Oh give not him thy hand, now I am dead.  
He seeks thy love ; who, coward, in the night,  
Hired a villain to bereave my life."

She sat with dead cold limbs, stiffened to stone ;  
She took the gory head up in her arms ;  
She kissed the pale lips ; she had no tears to shed ;  
She hugged it to her breast, and groaned her last.

SONG.<sup>1</sup>

OW sweet I roamed from field to field,  
 And tasted all the summer's pride,  
 Till I the Prince of Love beheld  
 Who in the sunny beams did glide.

He showed me lilies for my hair,  
 And blushing roses for my brow ;  
 He led me through his gardens fair  
 Where all his golden pleasures grow.

With sweet May-dews my wings were wet,  
 And Phœbus fired my vocal rage ;  
 He caught me in his silken net,  
 And shut me in his golden cage.


He loves to sit and hear me sing,  
 Then, laughing, sports and plays with me ;  
 Then stretches out my golden wing,  
 And mocks my loss of liberty.

---

<sup>1</sup> This lovely lyric is affirmed to have been written by Blake before he was fourteen years of age.




## SONG.

Y silks and fine array,  
 My smiles and languished air,  
 By love are driven away ;  
 And mournful lean Despair  
 Brings me yew to deck my grave :  
 Such end true lovers have.

His face is fair as heaven  
 When springing buds unfold ;  
 Oh why to him was't given,  
 Whose heart is wintry cold ?  
 His breast is love's all-worshiped tomb,  
 Where all love's pilgrims come.

Bring me an axe and spade,  
 Bring me a winding-sheet ;  
 When I my grave have made,  
 Let winds and tempests beat :  
 Then down I'll lie, as cold as clay.  
 True love doth pass away !

## SONG.

OVE and harmony combine,  
 And around our souls entwine,  
 While thy branches mix with mine,  
 And our roots together join.


Joys upon our branches sit,  
 Chirping loud and singing sweet ;  
 Like gentle streams beneath our feet,  
 Innocence and virtue meet.

Thou the golden fruit dost bear,  
 I am clad in flowers fair ;  
 Thy sweet boughs perfume the air,  
 And the turtle buildeth there.

There she sits and feeds her young,  
 Sweet I hear her mournful song ;  
 And thy lovely leaves among  
 There is Love ; I hear his tongue.

There his charming nest doth lay,  
 There he sleeps the night away ;  
 There he sports along the day,  
 And doth among our branches play.

## SONG.

 LOVE the jocund dance,  
 The softly-breathing song,  
 Where innocent eyes do glance,  
 And where lips the maiden's tongue.


I love the laughing vale,  
 I love the echoing hill,  
 Where mirth does never fail,  
 And the jolly swain laughs his fill.

I love the pleasant cot,  
 I love the innocent bower,  
 Where white and brown is our lot,  
 Or fruit in the mid-day hour.

I love the oaken seat  
 Beneath the oaken tree,  
 Where all the old villagers meet,  
 And laugh our sports to see.

I love our neighbours all,—  
 But, Kitty, I better love thee ;  
 And love them I ever shall,  
 But thou art all to me.

## SONG.

 MEMORY, hither come,  
 And tune your merry notes :  
 And, while upon the wind  
 Your music floats,

I'll pore upon the stream  
 Where sighing lovers dream,  
 And fish for fancies as they pass  
 Within the watery glass.

I'll drink of the clear stream,  
 And hear the linnet's song,  
 And there I'll lie and dream  
 The day along :

And, when night comes, I'll go  
 To places fit for woe,  
 Walking along the darkened valley  
 With silent Melancholy.

## MAD SONG.



HE wild winds weep,  
 And the night is a-cold ;  
 Come hither, Sleep,  
 And my griefs enfold ! . . .

But lo ! the morning peeps  
 Over the eastern steeps,  
 And the rustling beds<sup>1</sup> of dawn  
 The earth do scorn.

Lo ! to the vault  
 Of pavèd heaven,  
 With sorrow fraught,  
 My notes are driven :  
 They strike the ear of Night,  
 Make weep the eyes of Day ;  
 They make mad the roaring winds,  
 And with tempests play.

Like a fiend in a cloud,  
 With howling woe  
 After night I do crowd  
 And with night will go ;

---

<sup>1</sup> Should this be "birds?" So printed in the selection made in Gilchrist's *Life of Blake*.

I turn my back to the east  
 From whence comforts have increased;  
 For light doth seize my brain  
 With frantic pain.

SONG.<sup>1</sup>

**F**RESH from the dewy hill, the morn'  
 Year  
 Smiles on my head, and mounts his  
 flaming car;  
 Round my young brows the laurel wreathes a shade  
 And rising glories beam around my head.

My feet are winged, while o'er the dewy lawn  
 I meet my maiden risen like the morn.  
 Oh bless those holy feet, like angels' feet;  
 Oh bless those limbs, beaming with heavenly light

Like as an angel glittering in the sky  
 In times of innocence and holy joy;  
 The joyful shepherd stops his grateful song  
 To hear the music of an angel's tongue.

So, when she speaks, the voice of Heaven I hear  
 So, when we walk, nothing impure comes near;  
 Each field seems Eden, and each calm retreat;  
 Each village seems the haunt of holy feet.


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<sup>1</sup> The love-songs in this series were written *before* Blake had any acquaintanceship with Catharine Boucher, who became his wife.



Out, that sweet village where my black-eyed maid  
 Closes her eyes in sleep beneath night's shade  
 Whene'er I enter, more than mortal fire  
 Burns in my soul, and does my song inspire.

## SONG.


 HEN early Morn walks forth in sober  
 grey,  
 Then to my black-eyed maid I haste  
 away.

When Evening sits beneath her dusky bower,  
 And gently sighs away the silent hour,  
 The village bell alarms, away I go,  
 And the vale darkens at my pensive woe.

To that sweet village where my black-eyed maid  
 Doth drop a tear beneath the silent shade  
 I turn my eyes ; and pensive as I go  
 Curse my black stars, and bless my pleasing woe.

Oft, when the Summer sleeps among the trees,  
 Whispering faint murmurs to the scanty breeze,  
 I walk the village round ; if at her side  
 A youth doth walk in stolen joy and pride,  
 I curse my stars in bitter grief and woe,  
 That made my love so high, and me so low.

Oh should she e'er prove false, his limbs I'd tear  
 And throw all pity on the burning air !  
 I'd curse bright fortune for my mixèd lot,  
 And then I'd die in peace, and be forgot.

## TO THE MUSES.

**W**HETHER on Ida's shady brow,  
 Or in the chambers of the East,  
 The chambers of the Sun, that now  
 From ancient melody have ceased;

Whether in heaven ye wander fair,  
 Or the green corners of the earth,  
 Or the blue regions of the air  
 Where the melodious winds have birth;

Whether on crystal rocks ye rove,  
 Beneath the bosom of the sea,  
 Wandering in many a coral grove;  
 Fair Nine, forsaking Poetry;

How have you left the ancient love  
 That bards of old enjoyed in you!  
 The languid strings do scarcely move,  
 The sound is forced, the notes are few!

## GWIN, KING OF NORWAY.

**Q**OME, Kings, and listen to my song.—  
 When Gwin, the son of Nore,  
 Over the nations of the North  
 His cruel sceptre bore;

The Nobles of the land did feed  
Upon the hungry poor ;  
They tear the poor man's lamb, and drive  
The needy from their door.

' The land is desolate ; our wives  
And children cry for bread ;  
Arise, and pull the tyrant down !  
Let Gwin be humbled ! "

Jordred the giant roused himself  
From sleeping in his cave ;  
He shook the hills, and in the clouds  
The troubled banners wave.

Beneath them rolled, like tempests black,  
The numerous sons of blood ;  
Like lions' whelps, roaring abroad,  
Seeking their nightly food.

Down Bleron's hills they dreadful rush,  
Their cry ascends the clouds ;  
The trampling horse and clanging arms  
Like rushing mighty floods !

Their wives and children, weeping loud,  
Follow in wild array,  
Howling like ghosts, furious as wolves  
In the bleak wintry day.

" Pull down the tyrant to the dust,  
Let Gwin be humbled,"  
They cry, " and let ten thousand lives  
Pay for the tyrant's head ! "

From tower to tower the watchmen cry :  
" O Gwin, the son of Nore,  
Arouse thyself ! the nations, black  
Like clouds, come rolling o'er ! "

Gwin reared his shield, his palace shakes,  
His chiefs come rushing round ;  
Each like an awful thunder-cloud  
With voice of solemn sound :

Like reared stones around a grave  
They stand around the King ;  
Then suddenly each seized his spear,  
And clashing steel does ring.

The husbandman does leave his plough  
To wade through fields of gore ;  
The merchant binds his brows in steel,  
And leaves the trading shore ;

The shepherd leaves his mellow pipe,  
And sounds the trumpet shrill ;  
The workman throws his hammer down  
To heave the bloody bill.

Like the tall ghost of Barraton  
Who sports in stormy sky,  
Gwin leads his host as black as night  
When pestilence does fly,

With horses and with chariots—  
And all his spearmen bold  
March to the sound of mournful song,  
Like clouds around him rolled.

Gwin lifts his hand—the nations halt ;  
“ Prepare for war ! ” he cries.  
Gordred appears !—his frowning brow  
Troubles our northern skies.

The armies stand, like balances  
Held in the Almighty's hand ;—  
“ Gwin, thou hast filled thy measure up :  
Thou'rt swept from out the land.”

And now the raging armies rushed  
Like warring mighty seas ;  
The heavens are shook with roaring war,  
The dust ascends the skies !

Earth smokes with blood, and groans and shakes  
To drink her children's gore,  
A sea of blood ; nor can the eye  
See to the trembling shore.

And on the verge of this wild sea  
Famine and death do cry ;  
The cries of women and of babes  
Over the field do fly.

The king is seen raging afar,  
With all his men of might ;  
Like blazing comets scattering death  
Through the red feverous night.

Beneath his arm like sheep they die,  
And groan upon the plain ;  
The battle faints, and bloody men  
Fight upon hills of slain.

Now death is sick, and riven men  
Labour and toil for life ;  
Steed rolls on steed, and shield on shield,  
Sunk in this sea of strife !

The God of War is drunk with blood,  
The earth doth faint and fail ;  
The stench of blood makes sick the heavens,  
Ghosts glut the throat of hell !

Oh what have Kings to answer for  
Before that awful throne,  
When thousand deaths for vengeance cry,  
And ghosts accusing groan !

Like blazing comets in the sky  
That shake the stars of light,  
Which drop like fruit unto the earth  
Through the fierce burning night ;

Like these did Gwin and Gordred meet,  
And the first blow decides ;  
Down from the brow unto the breast  
Gordred his head divides !

Gwin fell : the Sons of Norway fled,  
All that remained alive ;  
The rest did fill the vale of death,—  
For them the eagles strive.

The river Dorman rolled their blood  
Into the northern sea ;  
Who mourned his sons, and overwhelmed  
The pleasant south country.

AN IMITATION OF SPENSER.<sup>1</sup>

OLDEN Apollo, that through heaven  
wide

Scatter'st the rays of light, and  
truth his beams,

In lucent words my darkling verses dight,  
And wash my earthy mind in thy clear  
streams,

That wisdom may descend in fairy dreams,  
All while the jocund Hours in thy train  
Scatter their fancies at thy poet's feet ;  
And, when thou yield'st to Night thy wide  
domain,  
Let rays of truth enlight his sleeping brain.

For brutish Pan in vain might thee assay  
With tinkling sounds to dash thy nervous  
verse,

Sound without sense ; yet in his rude affray  
(For Ignorance is Folly's leasing nurse,  
And love of Folly needs none other's curse)  
Midas the praise hath gained of lengthened ears,  
For which himself might deem him ne'er the  
worse

To sit in council with his modern peers,  
And judge of tinkling rhymes and elegances terse.

And thou, Mercurius, that with winged bow  
Dost mount aloft into the yielding sky,

---

<sup>1</sup> It need scarcely be pointed out to the reader that these verses have no imitative value: even the metre is missed.

And through heaven's halls thy airy flight dost  
 throw,  
 Entering with holy feet to where on high  
 Jove weighs the counsel of futurity ;  
 Then, laden with eternal fate, dost go  
 Down, like a falling star, from autumn sky,  
 And o'er the surface of the silent deep dost fly :

If thou arrivest at the sandy shore  
 Where nought but envious hissing adders  
 dwell,

Thy golden rod, thrown on the dusty floor,  
 Can charm to harmony with potent spell ;  
 Such is sweet Eloquence, that does dispel  
 Envy and Hate. that thirst for human gore ;  
 And cause in sweet society to dwell  
 Vile savage minds that lurk in lonely cell.

O Mercury, assist my labouring sense  
 That round the circle of the world would fly,  
 As the wing'd eagle scorns the towery fence  
 Of Alpine hills round his high aëry,  
 And searches through the corners of the sky,  
 Sports in the clouds to hear the thunder's sound,  
 And see the winged lightnings as they fly ;  
 Then, bosomed in an amber cloud, around  
 Plumes his wide wings, and seeks Sol's palace  
 high.

And thou, O Warrior maid invincible,  
 Armed with the terrors of Almighty Jove,  
 Pallas, Minerva, maiden terrible,  
 Lov'st thou to walk the peaceful solemn grove,  
 In solemn gloom of branches interwove ?



Or bear'st thy ægis o'er the burning field  
 Where like the sea the waves of battle move ?  
 Or have thy soft piteous eyes beheld  
 The weary wanderer through the desert rove ?  
 Or does the afflicted man thy heavenly bosom  
 move ?

## BLIND-MAN'S BUFF.

**W**HEN silver snow decks Susan's clothes,  
 And jewel hangs at th' shepherd's nose,  
 The blushing bank is all my care,  
 With hearth so red, and walls so fair.

“ Heap the sea-coal, come, heap it higher ;  
 The oaken log lay on the fire.”

The well-washed stools, a circling row,  
 With lad and lass, how fair the show !  
 The merry can of nut-brown ale,  
 The laughing jest, the love-sick tale,—  
 Till, tired of chat, the game begins.  
 The lasses prick the lads with pins.  
 Roger from Dolly twitched the stool ;  
 She, falling, kissed the ground, poor fool !  
 She blushed so red, with sidelong glance  
 At hobnail Dick, who grieved the chance.  
 But now for Blind-man's Buff they call ;  
 Of each incumbrance clear the hall.

Jenny her silken kerchief folds,  
 And blear-eyed Will the black lot holds.  
 Now laughing stops, with “ Silence, hush !”  
 And Peggy Pout gives Sam a push.  
 The Blind-man's arms, extended wide,




**With** crimson drops he stains the ground ;  
**Confusion** startles all around.  
**Poor** piteous Dick supports his head,  
**And** fain would cure the hurt he made.  
**But** Kitty hasted with a key,  
**And** down his back they straight convey  
**The** cold relief: the blood is stayed,  
**And** Hodge again holds up his head.

**Such** are the fortunes of the game ;  
**And** those who play should stop the same  
**By** wholesome laws, such as—All those  
**Who** on the blinded man impose  
**Stand** in his stead ; as, long ago  
**When** men were first a nation grown,  
**Lawless** they lived, till wantonness  
**And** liberty began to increase,  
**And** one man lay in another's way ;  
**Then** laws were made to keep fair play.

## A WAR SONG :

TO ENGLISHMEN.


**PREPARE**, prepare the iron helm of war,  
 Bring forth the lots, cast in the spacious  
 orb ;  
 The Angel of Fate turns them with  
 mighty hands,  
**And** casts them out upon the darkened earth !  
 Prepare, prepare !

Prepare your hearts for Death's cold hand ! prepare  
Your souls for flight, your bodies for the earth !  
Prepare your arms for glorious victory !  
Prepare your eyes to meet a holy God !  
Prepare, prepare !

Whose fatal scroll is that ? Methinks 'tis mine !  
Why sinks my heart, why faltereth my tongue ?  
Had I three lives, I'd die in such a cause,  
And rise, with ghosts, over the well-fought field.  
Prepare, prepare !

The arrows of Almighty God are drawn !  
Angels of Death stand in the louring heavens !  
Thousands of souls must seek the realms of light,  
And walk together on the clouds of heaven !  
Prepare, prepare !

Soldiers, prepare ! Our cause is Heaven's cause ;  
Soldiers, prepare ! Be worthy of our cause :  
Prepare to meet our fathers in the sky :  
Prepare, O troops that are to fall to-day !  
Prepare, prepare !

Alfred shall smile, and make his heart rejoice ;  
The Norman William, and the learned Clerk,  
And Lion-Heart, and black-browed Edward with  
His loyal queen, shall rise, and welcome us !  
Prepare, prepare !



## SAMSON.

**S**AMSON, the strongest of the children  
of men,  
I sing ; how he was foiled by woman's  
arts,

By a false wife brought to the gates of death.  
O Truth, that shinest with propitious beams,  
Turning our earthly night to heavenly day,  
From presence of the Almighty Father thou  
Visitest our darkling world with blessed feet,  
Bringing good news of Sin and Death destroyed !  
O white-robed Angel, guide my timorous hand  
To write as on a lofty rock with iron pen  
The words of truth, that all who pass may read.

Now Night, noon-tide of damnèd spirits,  
Over the silent earth spreads her pavilion,  
While in dark council sat Philistia's lords ;  
And, where strength failed, black thoughts in  
ambush lay.

There helmèd youth and aged warriors  
In dust together lie, and Desolation  
Spreads his wings over the land of Palestine :  
From side to side the land groans, her prowess lost,  
And seeks to hide her bruised head  
Under the mists of night, breeding dark plots.  
For Dalila's fair arts have long been tried in vain ;  
In vain she wept in many a treacherous tear.  
Go on, fair traitress ; do thy guileful work !  
Ere once again the changing moon

Her circuit hath performed, thou shalt overcome,  
 And conquer him by force unconquerable,  
 And wrest his secret from him.  
 Call thine alluring arts and honest-seeming brow,  
 The holy kiss of love and the transparent tear;  
 Put on fair linen that with the lily vies,  
 Purple and silver; neglect thy hair, to seem  
 More lovely in thy loose attire; put on  
 Thy country's pride, deceit, and eyes of love  
 Decked in mild sorrow; and sell thy lord for gold.

For now, upon her sumptuous couch reclined  
 In gorgeous pride, she still entreats, and still  
 She grasps his vigorous knees with her fair arms.  
 "Thou lov'st me not! thou'rt war, thou art not love!  
 O foolish Dalila! O weak woman!  
 It is Death clothed in flesh thou lovest,  
 And thou hast been encircled in his arms!  
 Alas, my lord, what am I calling thee?  
 Thou art my God! To thee I pour my tears  
 For sacrifice morning and evening:  
 My days are covered with sorrow; shut up,  
 darkened;  
 By night I am deceived!  
 Who says that thou wast born of mortal kind?  
 Destruction was thy father, a lioness  
 Suckled thee, thy young hands tore human limbs,  
 And gorged human flesh!  
 Come hither, Death: art thou not Samson's servant?  
 'Tis Dalila that calls,—thy master's wife.  
 No, stay, and let thy master do the deed:  
 One blow of that strong arm would ease my pain;  
 Then I should lie at quiet and have rest.

Pity forsook thee at thy birth ! O Dagon  
 Furious, and all ye gods of Palestine,  
 Withdraw your hand! I am but a weak woman.  
 Alas, I am wedded to your enemy !  
 I will go mad, and tear my crisped hair ;  
 I'll run about, and pierce the ears o' the gods !  
 O Samson, hold me not ; thou lov'st me not !  
 Look not upon me with those deathful eyes !  
 Thou wouldst my death, and death approaches  
 fast."

Thus, in false tears, she bathed his feet,  
 And thus she day by day oppressed his soul.  
 He seemed a mountain, his brow among the clouds ;  
 She seemed a silver stream, his feet embracing.

Dark thoughts rolled to and fro in his mind,  
 Like thunder-clouds troubling the sky ;  
 His visage was troubled ; his soul was distressed.  
 " Though I should tell her all my heart, what can  
 I fear ?  
 Though I should tell this secret of my birth,  
 The utmost may be warded off as well when told as  
 now."

She saw him moved, and thus resumes her wiles.  
 " Samson, I'm thine ; do with me what thou wilt ;  
 My friends are enemies ; my life is death ;  
 I am a traitor to my nation, and despised ;  
 My joy is given into the hands of him  
 Who hates me, using deceit to the wife of his  
 bosom.  
 Thrice hast thou mockèd me and grieved my soul.  
 Didst thou not tell me with green withes to bind

Thy nervous arms, and, after that,  
 When I had found thy falsehood, with new ropes  
 To bind thee fast? I knew thou didst but mock  
 me.

Alas, when in thy sleep I bound thee with them,  
 To try thy truth, I cried, 'The Philistines  
 Be upon thee, Samson!' Then did suspicion wake  
 thee;

How didst thou rend the feeble ties!  
 Thou fearest nought, what shouldst thou fear?  
 Thy power is more than mortal, none can hurt  
 thee;

Thy bones are brass, thy sinews are iron;  
 Ten thousand spears are like the summer grass;  
 An army of mighty men are as flocks in the  
 valleys:

What canst thou fear? I drink my tears like water;  
 I live upon sorrow! O worse than wolves and tigers,  
 What canst thou give when such a trifle is denied  
 me?

But oh! at last thou mockest me, to shame  
 My over-fond enquiry! Thou told'st me  
 To weave thee to the beam by thy strong hair;  
 I did even that to try thy truth; but, when  
 I cried 'The Philistines be upon thee!' then  
 Didst thou leave me to bewail that Samson lov~~e~~  
 me not."

He sat, and inward grieved:  
 He saw and loved the beauteous suppliant,  
 Nor could conceal aught that might appease her.  
 Then, leaning on her bosom, thus he spoke:  
 "Hear, O Dalila! doubt no more of Samson's love;



that fair breast was made the ivory palace  
 my inmost heart, where it shall lie at rest.  
 sorrow is the lot of all of woman born :  
 care was I brought forth, and labour is my  
 lot :  
 matchless might, nor wisdom, nor every gift  
 enjoyed,  
 from the heart of man hide sorrow.  
 mine was my birth foretold from heaven, and  
 twice  
 sacred vow enjoined me that I should drink  
 wine, nor eat of any unclean thing,  
 holy unto Israel's God I am,  
 Nazarite even from my mother's womb.  
 mine was it told, that it might not be broken.  
 grant me a son, kind Heaven,' Manoa cried ;  
 Heaven refused.  
 He mourned, but thought his God knew  
 best.  
 solitude, though not obscure, in Israel  
 lived, till venerable age came on :  
 flocks increased, and plenty crowned his  
 board :  
 loved, revered of man. But God hath other joys  
 store. Is burdened Israel his grief?  
 son of his old age shall set it free !  
 venerable sweetener of his life  
 gives the promise first from heaven. She saw  
 maidens play, and blessed their innocent  
 mirth ;  
 blessed each new-joined pair ; but from her  
 long-wished deliverer shall spring.  
 sive, alone she sat within the house,

When busy day was fading, and calm evening,  
Time for contemplation, rose  
From the forsaken east, and drew the curtains of  
heaven.

Pensive she sat, and thought on Israel's grief,  
And silent prayed to Israel's God; when lo!  
An angel from the fields of light entered the house.  
His form was manhood in the prime,  
And from his spacious brow shot terrors through  
the evening shade.

But mild he hailed her—'Hail, highly favoured!'  
said he;

'For lo! thou shalt conceive, and bear a son,  
And Israel's strength shall be upon his shoulders,  
And he shall be called Israel's Deliverer.  
Now, therefore, drink no wine, and eat not any  
unclean thing,

For he shall be a Nazarite to God.'

Then, as a neighbour, when his evening tale is told,  
Departs, his blessing leaving, so seemed he to  
depart:

She wondered with exceeding joy, nor knew he  
was an angel.

Manoa left his fields to sit in the house,  
And take his evening's rest from labour—

The sweetest time that God has allotted mortal  
man.

He sat, and heard with joy,

And praised God, who Israel still doth keep.

The time rolled on, and Israel groaned oppressed.

The sword was bright, while the ploughshare  
rusted,

Till hope grew feeble, and was ready to give place  
to doubting.

I prayed Manoa :  
 Lord, thy flock is scattered on the hills,—  
 wolf teareth them ;  
 Goliath stretches his rod over our land ;  
 our country is ploughed with swords, and reaped  
 in blood ;  
 echoes of slaughter reach from hill to hill ;  
 instead of peaceful pipe, the shepherd bears  
 sword ; the ox-goad is turned into a spear !  
 when shall our Deliverer come ?  
 Philistine riots on our flocks,  
 vintage is gathered by bands of enemies !  
 stretch forth thy hand, and save.'—Thus prayed  
 Manoa.  
 An aged woman walked into the field,  
 and lo ! again the angel came,  
 as a traveller fresh risen on his journey.  
 She ran and called her husband, who came and  
 talked with him.  
 'Man of God,' said he, 'thou com'st from far !  
 we detain thee while I make ready a kid,  
 that thou mayst sit and eat, and tell us of thy  
 name and warfare ;'<sup>1</sup>  
 'But, when thy sayings come to pass, we may  
 honour thee.'  
 The angel answered, 'My name is Wonderful ;  
 inquire not after it, seeing it is a secret ;  
 if thou wilt, offer an offering unto the Lord.'''

[END OF THE POETICAL SKETCHES.]

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<sup>1</sup> Should this word be "wayfare"?



## THE BOOK OF THEL

EMERSON (1856.)

Does the Eagle know what is in the pit,  
Or wilt thou go seek the Moise?  
Can Wisdom be put in a silver rod,  
Or Love in a golden bowl?

L

**T**HE Daughters of the Seraphim led round  
their sunny flocks,—  
All but the youngest: she in paleness  
sought the secret air.

To fade away like morning beauty from her  
mortal day.

Down by the river of Adona her soft voice is  
heard,

And thus her gentle lamentation falls like  
morning dew.

“O life of this our Spring! why fades the lotus of  
the water?

Why fade these children of the Spring, born but  
to smile and fall?

Ah! Thel is like a watery bow, and like a parting  
cloud,

Like a reflection in a glass, like shadows in the  
water,

Like dreams of infants, like a smile upon an  
infant's face,

Like the dove's voice, like transient day, like music  
in the air.

Ah! gentle may I lay me down, and gentle rest  
my head,

And gentle sleep the sleep of death, and gentle  
hear the voice

Of Him that walketh in the garden in the evening  
time!"

The Lily of the Valley, breathing in the humble  
grass,

Answered the lovely maid, and said: "I am a  
watery weed,

And I am very small, and love to dwell in lowly  
vales;

So weak the gilded butterfly scarce perches on my  
head.

Yet I am visited from heaven; and He that smiles  
on all

Walks in the valley, and each morn over me  
spreads his hand,

Saying, 'Rejoice, thou humble grass, thou new-  
born lily-flower,

Thou gentle maid of silent valleys and of modest  
brooks;

For thou shalt be clothed in light, and fed with  
morning manna,

Till summer's heat melts thee beside the fountains  
and the springs,

To flourish in eternal vales.' Then why should  
Thel complain?  
Why should the mistress of the vales of Har utter  
a sigh?"

She ceased, and smiled in tears, then sat down in  
her silver shrine.

Thel answered: "O thou little virgin of the  
peaceful valley,  
Giving to those that cannot crave, the voiceless,  
the o'ertired,  
Thy breath doth nourish the innocent lamb; he  
smells thy milky garments,  
He crops thy flowers, while thou sittest smiling  
in his face,  
Wiping his mild and meekin mouth from all con-  
tagious taints.  
Thy wine doth purify the golden honey; thy  
perfume,  
Which thou dost scatter on every little blade of  
grass that springs,  
Revives the milkèd cow, and tames the fire-  
breathing steed.  
But Thel is like a faint cloud kindled at the rising  
sun:  
I vanish from my pearly throne, and who shall  
find my place?"

"Queen of the vales," the Lily answered, "ask  
the tender Cloud,  
And it shall tell thee why it glitters in the morning  
sky,

And why it scatters its bright beauty through the  
 humid air.  
 Descend, O little Cloud, and hover before the eyes  
 of Thel."

The Cloud descended; and the Lily bowed her  
 modest head,  
 And went to mind her numerous charge among  
 the verdant grass.

## II.

"O little Cloud," the virgin said, "I charge thee  
 tell to me  
 Why thou complainest not, when in one hour thou  
 fad'st away:  
 Then we shall seek thee, but not find. Ah! Thel  
 is like to thee,—  
 I pass away; yet I complain, and no one hears my  
 voice."

The Cloud then showed his golden head, and his  
 bright form emerged,  
 Hovering and glittering on the air, before the face  
 of Thel.

"O virgin, know'st thou not our steeds drink of  
 the golden springs  
 Where Luvah doth renew his horses? Look'st  
 thou on my youth,  
 And fearest thou because I vanish and am seen  
 no more?  
 Nothing remains. O maid, I tell thee, when I  
 pass away,

It is to tenfold life, to love, to peace, and raptures  
 holy.  
 Unseen descending weigh my light wings upon  
 balmy flowers,  
 And court the fair-eyed Dew to take me to her  
 shining tent:  
 The weeping virgin trembling kneels before the  
 risen sun,  
 Till we arise, linked in a golden band, and never  
 part,  
 But walk united, bearing food to all our tender  
 flowers."

"Dost thou, O little Cloud? I fear that I am  
 not like thee;—  
 For I walk through the vales of Har, and smell  
 the sweetest flowers,  
 But I feed not the little flowers: I hear the  
 warbling birds,  
 But I feed not the warbling birds, they fly and  
 seek their food.  
 But Thel delights in these no more! because I  
 fade away,  
 And all shall say, 'Without a use this shining  
 woman lived,  
 Or did she only live to be at death the food of  
 worms?' "

The Cloud reclined upon his airy throne, and  
 answered thus:

"Then if thou art the food of worms, O virgin of  
 the skies,



How great thy use, how great thy blessing!  
Every thing that lives

Lives not alone nor for itself. Fear not, and I  
will call

The weak Worm from its lowly bed, and thou  
shalt hear its voice.

Come forth, Worm of the silent valley, to thy  
pensive queen."

The helpless Worm arose, and sat upon the Lily's  
leaf,

And the bright Cloud sailed on to find his partner  
in the vale.

## III.

Then Thel, astonished, viewed the Worm upon its  
dewy bed.

"Art thou a worm, image of weakness? art thou  
but a worm?

I see thee, like an infant, wrapped in the Lily's  
leaf.

Ah! weep not, little voice; thou canst not speak,  
but thou canst weep.

Is this a worm? I see thee lie helpless and naked,  
weeping,

And none to answer, none to cherish thee with  
mother's smiles."

The Clod of Clay heard the Worm's voice, and  
raised her pitying head:

She bowed over the weeping infant, and her life  
exhaled

In milky fondness: then on The! she fixed her  
humble eyes.

“O beauty of the vales of Har! we live not for  
ourselves.

Thou seest me, the meanest thing, and so I am  
indeed.

My bosom of itself is cold, and of itself is dark;  
But He that loves the lowly pours his oil upon  
my head,

And kisses me, and binds his nuptial bands  
around my breast,

And says:—‘Thou mother of my children, I have  
loved thee,

And I have given thee a crown that none can  
take away.’

But how this is, sweet maid, I know not, and I  
cannot know;

I ponder, and I cannot ponder: yet I live and  
love!”

The Daughter of Beauty wiped her pitying tears  
with her white veil,

And said:—“Alas! I knew not this, and there-  
fore did I weep.

That God would love a worm I knew, and punish  
the evil foot

That wilful bruised its helpless form; but that  
he cherished it

With milk and oil I never knew, and therefore  
did I weep.

And I complained in the mild air, because I fade  
away,

And lay me down in thy cold bed, and leave my  
shining lot."

"Queen of the vales," the matron Clay answered,  
"I heard thy sighs,  
And all thy moans flew o'er my roof, but I have  
called them down.  
Wilt thou, O queen, enter my house? 'Tis given  
thee to enter,  
And to return: fear nothing, enter with thy virgin  
feet."

## IV.

The eternal gates' terrific Porter lifted the  
northern bar;  
Thel entered in, and saw the secrets of the land  
unknown.  
She saw the couches of the dead, and where the  
fibrous root  
Of every heart on earth infixes deep its restless  
twists:  
A land of sorrows and of tears, where never smile  
was seen.

She wandered in the land of clouds, through  
valleys dark, listening  
Dolours and lamentations, wailing oft beside a  
dewy grave.  
She stood in silence, listening to the voices of the  
ground,  
Till to her own grave-plot she came, and there she  
sat down,  
And heard this voice of sorrow breathed from the  
hollow pit.

“Why cannot the ear be closed to its own  
destruction?  
Or the glistening eye to the poison of a smile?  
Why are eyelids stored with arrows ready drawn,  
Where a thousand fighting-men in ambush lie,  
Or an eye of gifts and graces showering fruits and  
coined gold?  
Why a tongue impressed with honey from every  
wind?  
Why an ear, a whirlpool fierce to draw creations in?  
Why a nostril wide inhaling terror, trembling, and  
affright?  
Why a tender curb upon the youthful burning  
boy?  
Why a little curtain of flesh on the bed of our  
desire?”

The Virgin started from her seat, and with a  
shriek  
Fled back unhindered till she came into the vales  
of Har.



A MOTTO.<sup>1</sup>

HE Good are attracted by men's perceptions,  
 And think not for themselves,  
 Till Experience teaches them to catch  
 And to cage the Fairies and Elves.

And then the Knave begins to snarl,  
 And the Hypocrite to howl ;  
 And all his good friends show their private ends,  
 And the Eagle is known from the Owl.

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<sup>1</sup> This motto has been found in MS., marked as intended for the *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*. It is here printed for the first time, in virtue of its interest of association rather than its merit.





## SONGS OF INNOCENCE.

REVISED 1799.

### INTRODUCTION.

**P**IPING down the valleys wild,  
Piping songs of pleasant glee,  
On a cloud I saw a child,  
And he laughing said to me :

“ Pipe a song about a Lamb ! ”  
So I piped with merry cheer.


“ Piper, pipe that song again ; ”  
So I piped : he wept to hear.

“ Drop thy pipe, thy happy pipe ;  
Sing thy songs of happy cheer ! ”  
So I sang the same again,  
While he wept with joy to hear.

“ Piper, sit thee down and write  
In a book, that all may read.”  
So he vanished from my sight ;  
And I plucked a hollow reed,


And I made a rural pen,  
 And I stained the water clear,  
 And I wrote my happy songs  
 Every child may joy to hear.

## THE SHEPHERD. /

OW sweet is the shepherd's sweet lot!  
 From the morn to the evening he  
 strays;  
 He shall follow his sheep all the day,  
 And his tongue shall be filled with praise.

For he hears the lambs' innocent call,  
 And he hears the ewes' tender reply;  
 He is watchful while they are in peace,  
 For they know when their shepherd is nigh.

## THE ECHOING GREEN.

HE sun does arise,  
 And make happy the skies;  
 The merry bells ring,  
 To welcome the Spring;  
 The skylark and thrush,  
 The birds of the bush,  
 Sing louder around  
 To the bells' cheerful sound;  
 While our sports shall be seen  
 On the echoing green.

## BLAKE'S POEMS.

THE CHILD WITH WHITE HAIR,  
 WHOSE MOUTH SWEET SAYS,  
 SLEEPING UNDER THE OAK,  
 LISTENING THE WIND SING,  
 THEY WOULD BE OUR PLAY,  
 AND WOULD THEY BE SAY,  
 — SUCH SUCH WERE THE JOYS  
 WHEN WE LITTLE GIRLS AND BOYS—  
 IN THE FOUNTAIN-TIME WERE SEEN  
 ON THE SHEDDING GREEN.

TILL THE SUN WAS WEARY,  
 NO MORE CAN BE MERRY:  
 THE SUN DOES DESCEND,  
 AND OUR SPORTS HAVE AN END.  
 ROUND THE LIPS OF THEIR MOTHERS  
 MANY SISTERS AND BROTHERS,  
 LIKE BIRDS IN THEIR NEST,  
 ARE READY FOR REST,  
 AND SPORT NO MORE SEEN  
 ON THE DARKENING GREEN.

## THE LAMB. X




LITTLE lamb, who made thee?  
 Dost thou know who made thee,  
 Gave thee life, and bade thee feed,  
 By the stream and o'er the mead;  
 Gave thee clothing of delight,  
 Softest clothing, woolly, bright;



Gave thee such a tender voice,  
 Making all the vales rejoice?  
 Little lamb, who made thee?  
 Dost thou know who made thee?

Little lamb, I'll tell thee;  
 Little lamb, I'll tell thee:  
 He is callèd by thy name,  
 For He calls himself a Lamb.  
 He is meek, and He is mild,  
 He became a little child.  
 I a child, and thou a lamb,  
 We are callèd by his name.  
 Little lamb, God bless thee!  
 Little lamb, God bless thee!

### THE LITTLE BLACK BOY.

Y mother bore me in the southern wild,  
 And I am black, but oh my soul is  
 white!  
 White as an angel is the English child,  
 But I am black, as if bereaved of light.

My mother taught me underneath a tree,  
 And, sitting down before the heat of day,  
 She took me on her lap and kissèd me,  
 And, pointing to the East, began to say:

“ Look on the rising sun: there God does live,  
 And gives his light, and gives his heat away,

And flowers and trees and beasts and men receive  
Comfort in morning, joy in the noonday.

“ And we are put on earth a little space,  
That we may learn to bear the beams of love;  
And these black bodies and this sunburnt face  
Are but a cloud, and like a shady grove.

“ For, when our souls have learned the heat to bear,  
The cloud will vanish, we shall hear his voice,  
Saying, ‘ Come out from the grove, my love and  
care,  
And round my golden tent like lambs rejoice.’ ”

Thus did my mother say, and kissèd me,  
And thus I say to little English boy.  
When I from black, and he from white cloud free,  
And round the tent of God like lambs we joy,

I'll shade him from the heat till he can bear  
To lean in joy upon our Father's knee;  
And then I'll stand and stroke his silver hair,  
And be like him, and he will then love me.

### THE BLOSSOM



MERRY, merry sparrow!  
Under leaves so green  
A happy blossom  
Sees you, swift as arrow,  
Seek your cradle narrow,  
Near my bosom.

Pretty, pretty robin !  
 Under leaves so green  
 A happy blossom  
 Hears you sobbing, sobbing,  
 Pretty, pretty robin,  
 Near my bosom.

### THE CHIMNEY-SWEEPER.

**W**HEN my mother died I was very young,  
 And my father sold me while yet my  
     tongue  
 Could scarcely cry "Weep! weep!  
 weep! weep!"  
 So your chimneys I sweep, and in soot I sleep.

There's little Tom Dacre, who cried when his head,  
 That curled like a lamb's back, was shaved; so I  
     said,  
 "Hush, Tom! never mind it, for, when your head's  
     bare,  
 You know that the soot cannot spoil your white  
     hair."


And so he was quiet, and that very night,  
 As Tom was a-sleeping, he had such a sight!—  
 That thousands of sweepers, Dick, Joe, Ned, and  
     Jack,  
 Were all of them locked up in coffins of black.

And by came an angel, who had a bright key,  
And he opened the coffins, and set them all free;  
Then down a green plain, leaping, laughing, they  
run,  
And wash in a river, and shine in the sun.

Then naked and white, all their bags left behind,  
They rise upon clouds, and sport in the wind;  
And the Angel told Tom, if he'd be a good boy,  
He'd have God for his father, and never want joy.

And so Tom awoke, and we rose in the dark,  
And got with our bags and our brushes to work.  
Though the morning was cold, Tom was happy  
and warm:  
So, if all do their duty, they need not fear harm.

### THE LITTLE BOY LOST.

“ATHER, father, where are you going?  
Oh do not walk so fast!  
Speak, father, speak to your little boy,  
Or else I shall be lost.”

The night was dark, no father was there,  
The child was wet with dew;  
The mire was deep, and the child did weep,  
And away the vapour flew.

## THE LITTLE BOY FOUND.

**W**HE little boy lost in the lonely fen,  
 Led by the wandering light,  
 Began to cry, but God, ever nigh,  
 Appeared like his father, in white.

He kissed the child, and by the hand led,  
 And to his mother brought,  
 Who in sorrow pale, through the lonely dale,  
 The little boy weeping sought.

## LAUGHING SONG. ✕

**W**HEN the green woods laugh with the  
 voice of joy,  
 And the dimpling stream runs laughing  
 by;

When the air does laugh with our merry wit,  
 And the green hill laughs with the noise of it;

When the meadows laugh with lively green,  
 And the grasshopper laughs in the merry scene;  
 When Mary and Susan and Emily  
 With their sweet round mouths sing "Ha ha he!"

When the painted birds laugh in the shade,  
 Where our table with cherries and nuts is spread:  
 Come live, and be merry, and join with me,  
 To sing the sweet chorus of "Ha ha he!"

## A CRADLE SONG.



SWEET dreams, form a shade  
 O'er my lovely infant's head!  
 Sweet dreams of pleasant stream  
 By happy, silent, moony beams

Sweet Sleep, with soft down  
 Weave thy brows an infant crown!  
 Sweet Sleep, angel mild,  
 Hover o'er my happy child!

Sweet smiles, in the night  
 Hover over my delight!  
 Sweet smiles, mother's smile,  
 All the livelong night beguile.

Sweet moans, dovelike sighs,  
 Chase not slumber from thine eyes!  
 Sweet moan, sweeter smile,  
 All the dovelike moans beguile.

Sleep, sleep, happy child!  
 All creation slept and smiled.  
 Sleep, sleep, happy sleep,  
 While o'er thee doth mother weep.

Sweet babe, in thy face  
 Holy image I can trace;  
 Sweet babe, once like thee  
 Thy Maker lay, and wept for me:

Wept for me, for thee, for all,  
 When He was an infant small.  
 Thou his image ever see,  
 Heavenly face that smiles on thee !

Smiles on thee, on me, on all,  
 Who became an infant small ;  
 Infant smiles are his own smiles ;  
 Heaven and earth to peace beguiles.

## THE DIVINE IMAGE.



O Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love,  
 All pray in their distress,  
 And to these virtues of delight  
 Return their thankfulness.

For Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love,  
 Is God our Father dear ;  
 And Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love,  
 Is man, His child and care.

For Mercy has a human heart ;  
 Pity, a human face ;  
 And Love, the human form divine ;  
 And Peace, the human dress.

Then every man, of every clime,  
 That prays in his distress,  
 Prays to the human form divine :  
 Love, Mercy, Pity, Peace.

And all must love the human form,  
 In heathen, Turk, or Jew.  
 Where Mercy, Love, and Pity dwell,  
 There God is dwelling too.

X HOLY THURSDAY.

**W**AS on a Holy Thursday, their inno-  
 cent faces clean,  
 Came children walking two and two,  
 in red, and blue, and green :  
 Grey-headed beades walked before, with wands as  
 white as snow,  
 Till into the high dome of Paul's they like Thames  
 waters flow.

Oh what a multitude they seemed, these flowers of  
 London town !  
 Seated in companies they sit, with radiance all  
 their own.  
 The hum of multitudes was there, but multitudes  
 of lambs,  
 Thousands of little boys and girls raising their  
 innocent hands.

Now like a mighty wind they raise to heaven the  
 voice of song,  
 Or like harmonious thunderings the seats of  
 heaven among :  
 Beneath them sit the aged men, wise guardians of  
 the poor.  
 Then cherish pity, lest you drive an angel from  
 your door.



7  
NIGHT. X

HE sun descending in the west,  
 The evening star does shine ;  
 The birds are silent in their nest,  
 And I must seek for mine.

The moon, like a flower  
 In heaven's high bower,  
 With silent delight,  
 Sits and smiles on the night.

Farewell, green fields and happy grove,  
 Where flocks have ta'en delight.  
 Where lambs have nibbled, silent move  
 The feet of angels bright ;  
 Unseen, they pour blessing,  
 And joy without ceasing,  
 On each bud and blossom,  
 And each sleeping bosom.

They look in every thoughtless nest  
 Where birds are covered warm ;  
 They visit caves of every beast,  
 To keep them all from harm :  
 If they see any weeping  
 That should have been sleeping,  
 They pour sleep on their head,  
 And sit down by their bed.

When waves and tigers howl in  
 They crying sound and weep ;  
 Seeking to drive their thirst away,  
 And keep them from the sheep.  
 But if they run dreadful,  
 The angels most beautiful  
 Receive such mild spirit,  
 New words in their heart.

And there the sun's ruddy eyes  
 Shall fall with tears of gold :  
 And passing the tender cries,  
 And walking round the field :  
 Saying : - Wash by His meekness,  
 And by His health, sickness,  
 Are driven away  
 From our immortal day.

- And now beside thee, bleating lamb,  
 I can lie down and sleep,  
 Or think of Him who bore thy name,  
 Gaze after thee, and weep.  
 For, washed in life's river,  
 My bright mane for ever  
 Shall shine like the gold,  
 As I guard o'er the fold."

SPRING. ♫




FOUND the flute!  
Now 'tis mute;  
Birds delight,  
Day and night,  
Nightingale  
In the dale,  
Lark in sky,—  
Merrily,  
errily, merrily to welcome in the year.

Little boy,  
Full of joy;  
Little girl,  
Sweet and small;  
Cock does crow,  
So do you;  
Merry voice,  
Infant noise;  
y, merrily to welcome in the year.


Little lamb,  
Here I am;  
Come and lick  
My white neck;  
Let me pull  
Your soft wool;  
Let me kiss  
Your soft face;  
errily we welcome in the year.

## NURSE'S SONG.

HEN the voices of children are heard  
 on the green,  
 And laughing is heard on the hill,  
 My heart is at rest within my breast,  
 And everything else is still.  
 "Then come home, my children, the sun is gone  
 down,  
 And the dews of night arise ;  
 Come, come, leave off play, and let us away,  
 Till the morning appears in the skies."

"No, no, let us play, for it is yet day,  
 And we cannot go to sleep ;  
 Besides, in the sky the little birds fly,  
 And the hills are all covered with sheep."  
 "Well, well, go and play till the light fades away,  
 And then go home to bed."  
 The little ones leaped, and shouted, and laughed,  
 And all the hills echoèd.

## INFANT JOY. X

AVE no name ;  
 I am but two days old."  
 What shall I call thee ?  
 "I happy am,  
 Joy is my name."  
 Sweet joy befall thee !

Pretty joy!  
 Sweet joy, but two days old.  
 Sweet joy I call thee:  
 Thou dost smile,  
 I sing the while;  
 Sweet joy befall thee!

7 A DREAM. *Chapter 8*



INCE a dream did weave a shade  
 O'er my angel-guarded bed,  
 That an emmet lost its way  
 Where on grass methought I lay


Troubled, wildered, and forlorn,  
 Dark, benighted, travel-worn,  
 Over many a tangled spray,  
 All heart-broke, I heard her say:

“Oh my children! do they cry,  
 Do they hear their father sigh?  
 Now they look abroad to see,  
 Now return and weep for me.”

Pitying, I dropped a tear:  
 But I saw a glow-worm near,  
 Who replied, “What wailing wight  
 Calls the watchman of the night?”

“I am set to light the ground,  
 While the beetle goes his round:  
 Follow now the beetle's hum;  
 Little wanderer, hie thee home!”

## IN ANOTHER'S SORROW.



CAN I see another's woe,  
 And not be in sorrow too?  
 Can I see another's grief,  
 And not seek for kind relief?

Can I see a falling tear,  
 And not feel my sorrow's share?  
 Can a father see his child  
 Weep, nor be with sorrow filled?

Can a mother sit and hear  
 An infant groan, an infant fear?  
 No, no! never can it be!  
 Never, never can it be!

And may He who smiles on all  
 Hear the woe with sorrows small,  
 Hear the small bird's grief and care  
 Hear the woe that infants bear—

And not sit beside the nest,  
 Pouring pity in their breast,  
 And not sit the cradle near,  
 Weeping tear on infant's tear?


And not sit both night and day,  
 Wiping all our tears away?  
 Oh no! never can it be!  
 Never, never can it be!

He doth give ~~his~~ joy to all :  
 He becomes an infant small,  
 He becomes a man of woe,  
 He doth feel the sorrow too.

Think not thou canst sigh a sigh,  
 And thy Maker is not by :  
 Think not thou canst weep a tear,  
 And thy Maker is not near.

Oh He gives to us his joy,  
 That our grief He may destroy :  
 Till our grief is fled and gone  
 He doth sit by us and moan.

### THE VOICE OF THE ANCIENT BARD.

OUTH of delight ! come hither  
 And see the opening morn,  
 Image of Truth new-born.  
 Doubt is fled, and clouds of reason,  
 Dark disputes and artful teasing.  
 Folly is an endless maze ;  
 Tangled roots perplex her ways ;  
 How many have fallen there !  
 They stumble all night over bones of the dead ;  
 And feel—they know not what but care ;  
 And wish to lead others, when they should be led.





## SONGS OF EXPERIENCE.

(ENGRAVED 1794.)<sup>1</sup>

### INTRODUCTION.



HEAR the voice of the Bard,  
Who present, past, and future, sees;  
Whose ears have heard  
The Holy Word  
That walked among the ancient trees;

Calling the lapsèd soul,  
And weeping in the evening dew ;  
That might control  
The starry pole,  
And fallen, fallen light renew !

“ O Earth, O Earth, return !  
Arise from out the dewy grass !  
Night is worn,  
And the morn  
Rises from the slumbrous mass.


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<sup>1</sup> In order of date, the *Songs of Experience* should follow after the *Gates of Paradise* ; which were issued in 1793, but their close connection with the *Songs of Innocence* induces me to invert this order.



"Turn away no more ;  
 Why wilt thou turn away ?  
 The starry floor,  
 The watery shore,  
 Are given thee till the break of day."

## EARTH'S ANSWER.


 ARTH raised up her head  
 From the darkness dread and drear,  
 Her light fled,  
 Stony, dread,  
 And her locks covered with grey despair

"Prisoned on watery shore,  
 Starry jealousy does keep my den  
 Cold and hoar ;  
 Weeping o'er,  
 I hear the father of the ancient men.

"Selfish father of men !  
 Cruel, jealous, selfish fear !  
 Can delight,  
 Chained in night,  
 The virgins of youth and morning bear ?

"Does spring hide its joy,  
 When buds and blossoms grow ?  
 Does the sower  
 Sow by night,  
 Or the ploughman in darkness plough ?

“ Break this heavy chain,  
That does freeze my bones around !  
Selfish, vain,  
Eternal bane,  
That free love with bondage bound.”

✕ THE CLOD AND THE PEBBLE.

“ **L**OVE seeketh not itself to please,  
Nor for itself hath any care,  
But for another gives its ease,  
And builds a heaven in hell's despair.”

So sang a little clod of clay,  
Trodden with the cattle's feet,  
But a pebble of the brook  
Warbled out these metres meet :

“ Love seeketh only *Self* to please,  
To bind another to its delight,  
Joys in another's loss of ease,  
And builds a hell in heaven's despite.”

HOLY THURSDAY.


“ **I**S this a holy thing to see  
In a rich and fruitful land,—  
Babes reduced to misery,  
Fed with cold and usurous hand ?

Is that trembling cry a song ?  
 Can it be a song of joy ?  
 And so many children poor ?  
 It is a land of poverty !

And their sun does never shine,  
 And their fields are bleak and bare,  
 And their ways are filled with thorns :  
 It is eternal winter there.

For where'er the sun does shine,  
 And where'er the rain does fall,  
 Babes should never hunger there,  
 • Nor poverty the mind appall.

### THE LITTLE GIRL LOST.

N futurity  
 I prophetic see  
 That the earth from sleep  
 (Grave the sentence deep)

Shall arise, and seek  
 For her Maker meek ;  
 And the desert wild  
 Become a garden mild.

In the southern clime,  
 Where the summer's prime  
 Never fades away,  
 Lovely Lyca lay.

Seven summers old  
Lovely Lyca told.  
She had wandered long,  
Hearing wild birds' song.

" Sweet sleep, come to me  
Underneath this tree ;  
Do father, mother, weep ?  
Where can Lyca sleep ?

" Lost in desert wild  
Is your little child.  
How can Lyca sleep  
If her mother weep ?

" If her heart does ache,  
Then let Lyca wake ;  
If my mother sleep,  
Lyca shall not weep.

" Frowning, frowning night,  
O'er this desert bright  
Let thy moon arise,  
While I close my eyes."

Sleeping Lyca lay  
While the beasts of prey,  
Come from caverns deep,  
Viewed the maid asleep.

The kingly lion stood,  
And the virgin viewed :  
Then he gambolled round  
O'er the hallowed ground.

Leopards, tigers, play  
Round her as she lay ;  
While the lion old  
Bowed his mane of gold,

And her breast did lick  
And upon her neck,  
From his eyes of flame,  
Ruby tears there came ;

While the lioness  
Loosed her slender dress,  
And naked they conveyed  
To caves the sleeping maid.

## THE LITTLE GIRL FOUND.



ALL the night in woe  
Lyca's parents go  
Over valleys deep,  
While the deserts weep.

Tired and woe-begone,  
Hoarse with making moan,  
Arm in arm, seven days  
They traced the desert ways.

Seven nights they sleep  
Among shadows deep,  
And dream they see their child  
Starved in desert wild.

Pale through pathless ways  
The fancied image strays,  
Famished, weeping, weak,  
With hollow piteous shriek.

Rising from unrest,  
The trembling woman pressed  
With feet of weary woe ;  
She could no further go.

In his arms he bore  
Her, armed with sorrow sore  
Till before their way  
A couching lion lay.

Turning back was vain :  
Soon his heavy mane  
Bore them to the ground.  
Then he stalked around,

Smelling to his prey ;  
But their fears allay  
When he licks their hands,  
And silent by them stands.

They look upon his eyes,  
Filled with deep surprise ;  
And wondering behold  
A spirit armed in gold.

On his head a crown,  
On his shoulders down  
Flowed his golden hair.  
Gone was all their care.

“ Follow me,” he said ;  
 “ Weep not for the maid ;  
 In my palace deep,  
 Lyca lies asleep.”

Then they followèd  
 Where the vision led,  
 And saw their sleeping child  
 Among tigers wild.

To this day they dwell  
 In a lonely dell,  
 Nor fear the wolvis howl  
 Nor the lion’s growl.

f THE CHIMNEY SWEEPER.



LITTLE black thing among the snow,  
 Crying “ weep ! weep ! ” in notes of  
 woe !

“ Where are thy father and mother ?  
 Say ! ”—

“ They are both gone up to the church to pray.

“ Because I was happy upon the heath,  
 And smiled among the winter’s snow,  
 They clothed me in the clothes of death,  
 And taught me to sing the notes of woe,

“ And because I am happy and dance and sing,  
 They think they have done me no injury,  
 And are gone to praise God and his priest and king,  
 Who make up a heaven of our misery.”

✓  
NURSE'S SONG.

**W**HEN the voices of children are heard on  
the green,  
And whisperings are in the dale,  
The days of my youth rise fresh in my  
mind,  
My face turns green and pale.

Then come home, my children, the sun is gone down,  
And the dews of night arise ;  
Your spring and your day are wasted in play,  
And your winter and night in disguise.

## THE SICK ROSE.




ROSE, thou art sick !  
The invisible worm,  
That flies in the night,  
In the howling storm,

Has found out thy bed  
Of crimson joy,  
And his dark secret love  
Does thy life destroy.



## THE FLY.

ITTLE Fly,  
Thy summer's play  
My thoughtless hand  
Has brushed away.

Am not I  
A fly like thee?  
Or art not thou  
A man like me?

For I dance,  
And drink, and sing,  
Till some blind hand  
Shall brush my wing.

If thought is life  
And strength and breath,  
And the want  
Of thought is death ;

Then am I  
A happy fly,  
If I live,  
Or if I die.



## THE ANGEL.



DREAMT a dream ! What can it mean ?  
 And that I was a maiden Queen  
 Guarded by an Angel mild :  
 Witless woe was ne'er beguiled !

And I wept both night and day,  
 And he wiped my tears away ;  
 And I wept both day and night,  
 And hid from him my heart's delight.

So he took his wings, and fled ;  
 Then the morn blushed rosy red.  
 I dried my tears, and armed my fears  
 With ten-thousand shields and spears.

Soon my Angel came again ;  
 I was armed, he came in vain ;  
 For the time of youth was fled,  
 And grey hairs were on my head.

X THE TIGER.



TIGER, tiger, burning bright  
 In the forests of the night,  
 What immortal hand or eye  
 Could frame thy fearful symmetry ?

In what distant deeps or skies  
 Burnt the fire of thine eyes ?  
 On what wings dare he aspire ?  
 What the hand dare seize the fire ?

And what shoulder and what art  
 Could twist the sinews of thy heart ?  
 And, when thy heart began to beat,  
 What dread hand and what dread feet ?

What the hammer ? what the chain ?  
 In what furnace was thy brain ?  
 What the anvil ? what dread grasp  
 Dare its deadly terrors clasp ?

When the stars threw down their spears,  
 And watered heaven with their tears,  
 Did he smile his work to see ?  
 Did he who made the lamb make thee ?

Tiger, tiger, burning bright  
 In the forests of the night,  
 What immortal hand or eye  
 Dare frame thy fearful symmetry ?


### MY PRETTY ROSE TREE.



FLOWER was offered to me,  
 Such a flower as May never bore ;  
 But I said " I've a pretty rose tree,"  
 And I passed the sweet flower o'er.


Then I went to my pretty rose tree,  
 To tend her by day and by night ;  
 But my rose turned away with jealousy,  
 And her thorns were my only delight.

### AH SUNFLOWER.

 H Sunflower, weary of time,  
 Who countest the steps of the sun ;  
 Seeking after that sweet golden clime  
 Where the traveller's journey is  
 done ;

Where the Youth pined away with desire,  
 And the pale virgin shrouded in snow,  
 Arise from their graves, and aspire  
 Where my Sunflower wishes to go !

### THE LILY.

 HE modest Rose puts forth a thorn,  
 The humble sheep a threat'ning horn :  
 While the Lily white shall in love  
 delight,  
 Nor a thorn nor a threat stain her beauty bright.

## THE GARDEN OF LOVE.



L AID me down upon a bank,  
Where Love lay sleeping ;  
I heard among the rushes dank  
Weeping, weeping.


Then I went to the heath and the wild,  
To the thistles and thorns of the waste ;  
And they told me how they were beguiled,  
Driven out, and compelled to be chaste.

I went to the Garden of Love,  
And saw what I never had seen ;  
A Chapel was built in the midst,  
Where I used to play on the green.

And the gates of this Chapel were shut,  
And "Thou shalt not" writ over the door ;  
So I turned to the Garden of Love  
That so many sweet flowers bore.

And I saw it was filled with graves,  
And tombstones where flowers should be ;  
And priests in black gowns were walking their  
rounds,  
And binding with briars my joys and desires.

## THE LITTLE VAGABOND.


 EAR mother, dear mother, the  
     is cold;  
 But the Alehouse is healthy, and  
     sant, and warm.  
 Besides, I can tell where I am used well;  
 The poor parsons with wind like a blown bla  
     swell,

But, if at the Church they would give us some  
 And a pleasant fire our souls to regale,  
 We'd sing and we'd pray all the livelong day,  
 Nor ever once wish from the Church to stray.

Then the Parson might preach, and drink, and sing  
 And we'd be as happy as birds in the spring;  
 And modest Dame Lurch, who is always at church  
 Would not have bandy children, nor fasting, no  
     birch.

And God, like a father, rejoicing to see  
 His children as pleasant and happy as he,  
 Would have no more quarrel with the Devil or th  
     barrel,  
 But kiss him, and give him both drink and appare



## LONDON.



WANDER through each chartered  
 street,  
 Near where the chartered Thames  
 does flow,  
 A mark in every face I meet —  
 Marks of weakness, marks of woe. —

In every cry of every man,  
 In every infant's cry of fear,  
 In every voice, in every ban,  
 The mind-forged manacles I hear :

How the chimney-sweeper's cry  
 Every blackening church appalls,  
 And the hapless soldier's sigh  
 Runs in blood down palace-walls.

But most, through midnight streets I hear  
 How the youthful harlot's curse  
 Blasts the new-born infant's tear,  
 And blights with plagues the marriage-hearse.

## THE HUMAN ABSTRACT.



DITY would be no more  
 If we did not make somebody poor,  
 And Mercy no more could be  
 If all were as happy as we.

And mutual fear brings Peace,  
Till the selfish loves increase ;  
Then Cruelty knits a snare,  
And spreads his baits with care.

He sits down with holy fears,  
And waters the ground with tears ;  
Then Humility takes its root  
Underneath his foot.

Soon spreads the dismal shade  
Of Mystery over his head,  
And the caterpillar and fly  
Feed on the Mystery.

And it bears the fruit of Deceit,  
Ruddy and sweet to eat,  
And the raven his nest has made  
In its thickest shade.

The gods of the earth and sea  
Sought through nature to find this tree,  
But their search was all in vain :  
There grows one in the human Brain.

## INFANT SORROW.

**M**Y mother groaned, my father wept :  
Into the dangerous world I leapt,  
Helpless, naked, piping loud,  
Like a fiend hid in a cloud.



Struggling in my father's hands,  
 Striving against my swaddling-bands,  
 Bound and weary, I thought best  
 To sulk upon my mother's breast.

## CHRISTIAN FORBEARANCE.



WAS angry with my friend :  
 I told my wrath, my wrath did end.  
 I was angry with my foe :  
 I told it not, my wrath did grow.


And I watered it in fears  
 Night and morning with my tears,  
 And I sunned it with smiles  
 And with soft deceitful wiles.

And it grew both day and night  
 Till it bore an apple bright,  
 And my foe beheld it shine,  
 And he knew that it was mine,—

And into my garden stole  
 When the night had veiled the pole ;  
 In the morning, glad, I see  
 My foe outstretched beneath the tree.



## A LITTLE BOY LOST.


 OUGHT loves another as itself,  
 Nor venerates another so,  
 Nor is it possible to thought  
 A greater than itself to know.

"And, father, how can I love you  
 Or any of my brothers more?  
 I love you like the little bird  
 That picks up crumbs around the door."

The Priest sat by and heard the child;  
 In trembling zeal he seized his hair,  
 He led him by his little coat,  
 And all admired the priestly care.

And standing on the altar high,  
 "Lo, what a fiend is here!" said he:  
 "One who sets reason up for judge  
 Of our most holy mystery."

The weeping child could not be heard,  
 The weeping parents wept in vain:  
 They stripped him to his little shirt,  
 And bound him in an iron chain,

And burned him in a holy place  
 Where many had been burned before;  
 The weeping parents wept in vain.  
 Are such things done on Albion's shore?

## A LITTLE GIRL LOST.



CHILDREN of the future age,  
Reading this indignant page,  
Know that in a former time  
Love, sweet love, was thought a crime.

In the age of gold,  
Free from winter's cold,  
Youth and maiden bright,  
To the holy light,  
Naked in the sunny beams delight.

Once a youthful pair,  
Filled with softest care,  
Met in garden bright  
Where the holy light  
Had just removed the curtains of the night.

Then, in rising day,  
On the grass they play ;  
Parents were afar,  
Strangers came not near,  
And the maiden soon forgot her fear.

Tired with kisses sweet,  
They agree to meet  
When the silent sleep  
Waves o'er heaven's deep,  
And the weary tired wanderers weep.

To her father white  
 Came the maiden bright ;  
 But his loving look  
 Like the holy book  
 All her tender limbs with terror shook.

" Oua, pale and weak,  
 To thy father speak !  
 Oh the trembling fear !  
 Oh the dismal care  
 That shakes the blossoms of my hoary hair !"

#### A DIVINE IMAGE.




**C**RUELTY has a human heart,  
 And Jealousy a human face ;  
 Terror the human form divine,  
 And Secresy the human dress.

The human dress is forgèd iron,  
 The human form a fiery forge,  
 The human face a furnace sealed,  
 The human heart its hungry gorge.



A CRADLE SONG.<sup>1</sup>

LEEP, sleep, beauty bright,  
 Dreaming in the joys of night ;  
 Sleep, sleep ; in thy sleep  
 Little sorrows sit and weep.

Sweet babe, in thy face  
 Soft desires I can trace,  
 Secret joys and secret smiles,  
 Little pretty infant wiles.

As thy softest limbs I feel,  
 Smiles as of the morning steal  
 O'er thy cheek, and o'er thy breast  
 Where thy little heart doth rest.

Oh the cunning wiles that creep  
 In thy little heart asleep !  
 When thy little heart doth wake,  
 Then the dreadful light shall break.

---

<sup>1</sup> This poem was not included in Blake's own edition of the *Songs of Experience*. But (as observed by D. G. Rossetti in *Gilchrist's Life of Blake*) it was obviously written to match with the *Cradle Song* pertaining to the *Songs of Innocence*, and here it finds its proper place.

## THE SCHOOLBOY.



LOVE to rise on a summer morn,  
When birds are singing on every  
tree :

The luteless huntsman winds his horn,  
And the skylark sings with me :  
Oh what sweet harmony !

But to go to school in a summer morn,—  
Oh it drives all joy away !  
Under a cruel eye outworn,  
The little ones spend the day  
In sorrow and dismay.

All then at times I drooping sit,  
And spend many an anxious hour ;  
Nor in my book can I take delight,  
Nor sit in learning's tower,  
Worn through with the dreary shower.

How can the bird that is born for joy  
Sit in a cage and sing ?  
How can a child when fears annoy,  
Ever keep his tender wing,  
And forget his youthful spring ?

father and mother, if buds are nipped,  
And blossoms blown away ;  
And if the tender plants are stripped  
Of their joy in the springing day,  
By sorrow and care's dismay,—

How shall the summer arise in joy,  
 Or the summer fruits appear ?  
 Or how shall we gather what griefs destroy,  
 Or bless the mellowing year,  
 When the blasts of winter appear ?

## TO TIRZAH.

**V**HATE'ER is born of mortal birth  
 Must be consumèd with the earth,  
 To rise from generation free :  
 Then what have I to do with thee ?

The sexes sprang from shame and pride,  
 Blown in the morn, in evening died ;  
 But mercy changed death into sleep ;  
 The sexes rose to work and weep.

Thou, mother of my mortal part,  
 With cruelty didst mould my heart,  
 And with false self-deceiving tears  
 Didst bind my nostrils, eyes, and ears,

Didst close my tongue in senseless clay,  
 And me to mortal life betray.  
 The death of Jesus set me free :  
 Then what have I to do with thee ?

THE TIGER,<sup>1</sup>

(SECOND VERSION.)



TIGER, Tiger, burning bright  
 In the forests of the night,  
 What immortal hand or eye  
 Framed thy fearful symmetry ?

In what distant deeps or skies  
 Burned that fire within thine eyes ?  
 On what wings dared he aspire ?  
 What the hand dared seize the fire ?

And what shoulder and what art  
 Could twist the sinews of thy heart ?  
 When thy heart began to beat,  
 What dread hand formed thy dread feet ?

What the hammer, what the chain,  
 Knit thy strength and forged thy brain ?  
 What the anvil ? What dread grasp  
 Dared thy deadly terrors clasp ?

---

<sup>1</sup> At p. 106 I have given this noble poem as it appears in Blake's engraved *Songs of Experience*. The present version is the one which figures in Mr. Gilchrist's book, and shows certain variations on MS. authority. These may be regarded as improvements; and I think it better to include this version as well.



When the stars threw down their spears,  
 And watered heaven with their tears,  
 Did he smile his work to see?  
 Did he who made the lamb make thee?

LAFAYETTE.<sup>1</sup>

“**L**ET the brothels of Paris be opened,  
 With many an alluring dance,  
 To awake the physicians through the  
 city,”

Said the beautiful Queen of France.

The King awoke on his couch of gold,  
 As soon as he heard these tidings told :  
 “ Arise and come, both life and drum,  
 And the famine shall eat both crust and crumb.”

Then he swore a great and solemn oath,  
 “ To kill the people I am loth : ”  
 And said—“ I love hanging and drawing and  
 quartering  
 Every bit as well as war and slaughtering.”

---

<sup>1</sup> This poem (or fragment of a poem) is extracted from Mr. D. G. Rossetti's MS. book. It was not published in Mr. Gilchrist's work, being deemed too odd and imperfect. There is, however, a certain element of poetical force in the poem, and it is at any rate extremely curious as indicating Blake's conceptions of contemporary history and politics. The MS. of it is much complicated by false starts and variations.

Fayette beside King Lewis stood ;  
He saw him sign his hand ;  
And soon he saw the famine rage  
About the fruitful land.

Fayette beheld the Queen to smile,  
And wink her lovely eye ;  
And soon he saw the pestilence  
From street to street to fly.

The Queen of France just touched this globe,  
And the pestilence darted from her robe :  
But the bloodthirsty people across the water  
Will not submit to the gibbet and halter.

Fayette beheld the King and Queen  
In curses and iron bound :  
But mute Fayette wept tear for tear,  
And guarded them around.

Fayette, Fayette, thou'rt bought and sold,  
And sold is thy happy morrow ;  
Thou givest the tears of pity away  
In exchange for the tears of sorrow .

Will the mother exchange her newborn babe  
For the dog at the wintry door ?  
Yet thou dost exchange thy pitying tears  
For the links of a dungeon-floor !





## THE GATES OF PARADISE.

(ENGRAVED 1793).

### INTRODUCTION.

**M**UTUAL forgiveness of each vice,  
Such are the Gates of Paradise,  
Against the Accuser's chief desire,  
Who walked among the stones of fire.  
Jehovah's fingers wrote the Law :  
He wept ; then rose in zeal and awe,  
And, in the midst of Sinai's heat,  
Hid it beneath his Mercy-Seat.  
O Christians ! Christians ! tell me why  
You rear it on your altars high !

### THE KEYS OF THE GATES.<sup>1</sup>

**T**HE caterpillar on the leaf  
Reminds thee of thy mother's grief.  
My Eternal Man set in repose,  
The Female from his darkness rose ;  
And she found me beneath a tree,

---

<sup>1</sup> These lines summarize the general drift of the successive designs to which they are appended.

A mandrake, and in her veil hid me.  
Serpent reasonings us entice  
Of good and evil, virtue, vice.  
Doubt self-jealous, watery folly,  
Struggling through Earth's melancholy.  
Naked in air, in shame and fear,  
Blind in fire, with shield and spear,  
Two horrid reasoning cloven fictions,  
In doubt which is self-contradiction,  
A dark hermaphrodite I stood,—  
Rational truth, root of evil and good.  
Round me, flew the flaming sword ;  
Round her, snowy whirlwinds roared,  
Freezing her veil, the mundane shell.  
I rent the veil where the dead dwell :  
When weary man enters his cave,  
He meets his Saviour in the grave.  
Some find a female garment there,  
And some a male, woven with care,  
Lest the sexual garments sweet  
Should grow a devouring winding-sheet.  
One dies ! alas ! the living and dead !  
One is slain, and one is fled !  
In vain-glory hatched and nursed,  
By double spectres, self-accursed.  
My son ! my son ! thou treatest me  
But as I have instructed thee.  
On the shadows of the moon,  
Climbing through night's highest noon :  
In Time's ocean falling, drowned :  
In aged ignorance profound,  
Holy and cold, I clipped the wings  
Of all sublunary things :

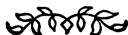
And in depths of icy dungeons  
 Closed the father and the sons,  
 But, when once I did descry  
 The Immortal Man that cannot die,  
 Through evening shades I haste away  
 To close the labours of my day.  
 The door of Death I open found,  
 And the worm weaving in the ground:  
 Thou'rt my mother, from the womb;  
 Wife, sister, daughter, to the tomb:  
 Weaving to dreams the sexual strife,  
 And weeping over the web of life.

## EPILOGUE.

TO THE ACCUSER, WHO IS THE GOD  
 OF THIS WORLD.



RULY, my Satan, thou art but a dunce,  
 And dost not know the garment from  
 the man;  
 Every harlot was a virgin once,  
 Nor canst thou ever change Kate into Nan.  
 Though thou art worshiped by the names divine  
 Of Jesus and Jehovah, thou art still  
 The son of morn in weary night's decline,  
 The lost traveller's dream under the hill.



TO MY DEAR FRIEND,

MRS. ANNA FLAXMAN.



HIS song to the flower of Flaxman's joy;  
 To the blossom of hope, for a sweet  
 decoy;  
 Do all that you can, or all that you may,  
 To entice him to Felpham and far away.

Away to sweet Felpham, for heaven is there;  
 The ladder of angels descends through the air;  
 On the turret<sup>1</sup> its spiral does softly descend,  
 Through the village then winds, at my cot it does  
 end.

You stand in the village and look up to heaven;  
 The precious stones glitter on flight seventy-seven;  
 And my brother is there; and my friend and thine  
 Descend and ascend with the bread and the wine.

The bread of sweet thought and the wine of  
 delight  
 Feed the village of Felpham by day and by night;  
 And at his own door the bless'd Hermit<sup>2</sup> does  
 stand,  
 Dispensing unceasing to all the wide land.

---

<sup>1</sup> Turret of Hayley's house.

<sup>2</sup> Hayley, the "Hermit of Eartham."

TO MR. BUTTS.<sup>1</sup>

**B**O my friend Butts I write  
 My first vision of light,  
 On the yellow sands sitting.  
 The sun was emitting

His glorious beams  
 From heaven's high streams.  
 Over sea, over land,  
 My eyes did expand  
 Into regions of air,  
 Away from all care ;  
 Into regions of fire,  
 Remote from desire :  
 The light of the morning  
 Heaven's mountains adorning.  
 In particles bright,  
 The jewels of light  
 Distinct shone and clear.  
 Amazed and in fear  
 I each particle gazed,  
 Astonished, amazed ;  
 For each was a man  
 Human-formed. Swift I ran,  
 For they beckoned to me,  
 Remote by the sea,  
 Saying : " Each grain of sand,  
 Every stone on the land,

---

<sup>1</sup> These verses come from a letter sent by Blake from Folpham to Mr. Butts on 2nd October, 1800.

Each rock and each hill,  
Each fountain and rill,  
Each herb and each tree,  
Mountain, hill, earth, and sea,  
Cloud, meteor, and star,  
Are men seen afar."

I stood in the streams  
Of heaven's bright beams,  
And saw Felpham sweet  
Beneath my bright feet,  
In soft female charms ;  
And in her fair arms  
My shadow I knew,  
And my wife's shadow too,  
And my sister and friend.  
We like infants descend  
In our shadows on earth,  
Like a weak mortal birth.  
My eyes more and more,  
Like a sea without shore,  
Continue expanding,  
The heavens commanding,  
Till the jewels of light,  
Heavenly men beaming bright,  
Appeared as one man,  
Who complacent began  
My limbs to unfold  
In his beams of bright gold ;  
Like dross purged away  
All my mire and my clay.  
Soft consumed in delight,  
In his bosom sun-bright  
I remained. Soft he smiled,



And I heard his voice mild,  
 Saying: "This is my fold,  
 O thou ram horned with gold,  
 Who awakest from sleep  
 On the sides of the deep.  
 On the mountains around  
 The roarings resound  
 Of the lion and wolf,  
 The loud sea and deep gulph.  
 These are guards of my fold,  
 O thou ram horned with gold!"  
 And the voice faded mild,—  
 I remained as a child;  
 All I ever had known  
 Before me bright shone:  
 I saw you and your wife  
 By the fountains of life.  
 Such the vision to me  
 Appeared on the sea.

TO MRS. BUTTS.<sup>1</sup>

LIFE of the friend of those I most revere,  
 Receive this tribute from a harp  
 sincere;  
 Go on in virtuous seed-sowing on  
 mould  
 Of human vegetation, and behold  
 Your harvest springing to eternal life,  
 Parent of youthful minds, and happy wife.

---

<sup>1</sup> Sent in the same letter as the preceding verses.

VERSES.<sup>1</sup>

**W**ITH happiness stretched across the hills  
 In a cloud that dewy sweetness distils,  
 With a blue sky spread over with wings,  
 And a mild sun that mounts and sings;  
 With trees and fields full of fairy elves,  
 And little devils who fight for themselves,  
 Remembering the verses that Hayley sung  
 When my heart knocked against the root of my  
     tongue,  
 With angels planted in hawthorn bowers,  
 And God himself in the passing hours ;  
 With silver angels across my way,  
 And golden demons that none can stay ;  
 With my father hovering upon the wind,  
 And my brother Robert just behind,  
 And my brother John, the evil one,<sup>2</sup>  
 In a black cloud making his moan ;  
 (Though dead, they appear upon my path,  
 Notwithstanding my terrible wrath ;  
 They beg, they entreat, they drop their tears,  
 Filled full of hopes, filled full of fears ;)  
 With a thousand angels upon the wind,  
 Pouring disconsolate from behind

<sup>1</sup> From a letter to Mr. Butts, dated towards November, 1802. The verses (Blake says) "were composed above a twelvemonth ago, while walking from Felpham to Lavant, to meet my sister."

<sup>2</sup> The eldest brother, who enlisted as a soldier.

drive them off,—and before my way  
 frowning Thistle implores my stay.  
 That to others a trifle appears  
 fills me full of smiles or tears ;  
 or double the vision my eyes do see,  
 and a double vision is always with me.  
 With my inward eye, 'tis an old man grey ;  
 With my outward, a thistle across my way.

“If thou goest back,” the Thistle said,  
 Thou art to endless woe betrayed ;  
 or here does Theotormon lour,  
 and here is Enitharmon's bower,<sup>1</sup>  
 and Los the terrible thus hath sworn,  
 because thou backward dost return,  
 o'erty, envy, old age, and fear,  
 shall bring thy wife upon a bier ;  
 and Butts shall give what Fuseli gave,  
 dark black rock and a gloomy cave.”  
 struck the thistle with my foot,  
 and broke him up from his delving root.  
 Must the duties of life each other cross ?  
 Must every joy be dung and dross ?  
 Must my dear Butts feel cold neglect  
 because I give Hayley his due respect ?  
 Must Flaxman look upon me as wild,  
 and all my friends be with doubts beguiled ?  
 Must my wife live in my sister's bane,  
 or my sister survive on my Love's pain ?  
 The curses of Los, the terrible shade,  
 and his dismal terrors, make me afraid.”

---

<sup>1</sup> Enitharmon and Los are Space and Time.

So I spoke, and struck in my wrath  
 The old man weltering upon my path.  
 Then Los appeared in all his power :  
 In the sun he appeared, descending before  
 My face in fierce flames ; in my double sight,  
 'Twas outward a sun, — inward, Los in his  
 might.

“ My hands are laboured day and night,  
 And ease comes never in my sight.  
 My wife has no indulgence given,  
 Except what comes to her from heaven.  
 We eat little, we drink less ;  
 This earth breeds not our happiness.  
 Another sun feeds our life's streams ;  
 We are not warmèd with thy beams.  
 Thou measurest not the time to me,  
 Nor yet the space that I do see :  
 My mind is not with thy light arrayed ;  
 Thy terrors shall not make me afraid.”

When I had my defiance given,  
 The sun stood trembling in heaven ;  
 The moon, that glowed remote below,  
 Became leprous and white as snow ;  
 And every soul of man on the earth  
 Felt affliction and sorrow and sickness and dearth.  
 Los flamed in my path, and the sun was hot  
 With the bows of my mind and the arrows of  
 thought :  
 My bowstring fierce with ardour breathes,  
 My arrows glow in their golden sheaves.  
 My brother and father march before ;  
 The heavens drop with human gore.

Now I a fourfold vision see,  
 And a fourfold vision is given to me ;  
 'Tis fourfold in my supreme delight,  
 And threefold in soft Beulah's night,  
 And twofold always. May God us keep  
 From single vision, and Newton's sleep !

VERSES.<sup>1</sup>

H why was I born with a different face ?  
 Why was I not born like the rest of  
 my race ?  
 When I look, each one starts ; when I  
 speak, I offend ;  
 Then I'm silent and passive, and lose every friend.  
  
 Then my verse I dishonour, my pictures despise ;  
 My person degrade, and my temper chastise ;  
 And the pen is my terror, the pencil my shame ;  
 All my talents I bury, and dead is my fame.  
 I am either too low or too highly prized ;  
 When elate I am envied, when meek I'm despised.

---

<sup>1</sup> These verses are contained in Blake's last extant letter from Felpham, dated 16th August 1803. They refer to differences which had arisen between himself and some of his acquaintances, particularly Hayley.



FROM  
J E R U S A L E M.

(ENGRAVED 1804.)

I.

TO THE PUBLIC.<sup>1</sup>




READER—of books—of heaven—  
And of that God from whom . . . .  
Who in mysterious Sinai's awful cave  
To Man the wondrous art of writing  
gave,  
Again he speaks in thunder and in fire,  
Thunder of thought, and flames of fierce desire :  
Even from the depths of hell his voice I hear  
Within the unfathomed caverns of my ear.  
Therefore I print : nor vain my types shall be,—  
Heaven, Earth, and Hell, henceforth shall live in  
harmony.

---

<sup>1</sup> From the preface to Chapter I. of the *Jerusalem*.

## II.

## TO THE JEWS.


 HE fields from Islington to Marybone,  
 To Primrose Hill and Saint John's  
 Wood,  
 Were builded over with pillars of gold ;  
 And there Jerusalem's pillars stood.

Her little ones ran on the fields,  
 The Lamb of God among them seen ;  
 And fair Jerusalem, his Bride,  
 Among the little meadows green.

Pancras and Kentish Town repose  
 Among her golden pillars high,  
 Among her golden arches which  
 Shine upon the starry sky.

The Jews'-Harp House and the Green Man,  
 The ponds where boys to bathe delight,  
 The fields of cows by Welling's Farm,  
 Shine in Jerusalem's pleasant sight.

She walks upon our meadows green,  
 The Lamb of God walks by her side ;  
 And every English child is seen,  
 Children of Jesus and his Bride

Forgiving trespasses and sins,  
 Lest Babylon, with cruel Og,  
 With moral and self-righteous law,  
 Should crucify in Satan's synagogue.

What are those golden builders doing  
 Near mournful ever-weeping Paddington—  
 Standing above that mighty ruin  
 Where Satan the first victory won ?

Where Albion slept beneath the fatal tree,  
 And the Druid's golden knife  
 Rioted in human gore,  
 In offerings of human life ?

They groaned aloud on London Stone,  
 They groaned aloud on Tyburn's brook :  
 Albion gave his deadly groan,  
 And all the Atlantic mountains shook.

Albion's spectre from his loins  
 Tore forth in all the pomp of war,  
 Satan his name : in flames of fire,  
 He stretched his druid pillars far.

Jerusalem fell from Lambeth's vale  
 Down through Poplar and Old Bow,  
 Through Malden, and across the sea,  
 In war and howling, death and woe.

The Rhine was red with human blood,  
 The Danube rolled a purple tide ;  
 On the Euphrates Satan stood,  
 And over Asia stretched his pride.



He withered up sweet Zion's hill  
 From every nation of the earth ;  
 He withered up Jerusalem's gates,  
 And in a dark land gave her birth.

He withered up the human form  
 By laws of sacrifice for sin,  
 Till it became a mortal worm,  
 But oh translucent all within !

The Divine Vision still was seen,  
Still was the human form divine ;  
 Weeping, in weak and mortal clay,  
 O Jesus ! still the form was thine !

And thine the human face ; and thine  
 The human hands, and feet, and breath,  
 Entering through the gates of birth,  
 And passing through the gates of death.

And O thou Lamb of God ! whom I  
 Slew in my dark self-righteous pride,  
 Art thou returned to Albion's land ?  
 And is Jerusalem thy Bride ?

Come to my arms, and never more  
 Depart, but dwell for ever here ;  
 Create my spirit to thy Love,  
 Subdue my spectre<sup>1</sup> to thy fear.

---

<sup>1</sup> " My spectre " means probably " my reasoning power. "

Spectre of Albion! warlike fiend!  
 In clouds of blood and ruin rolled,  
 I here reclaim thee as my own,  
 My selfhood; Satan armed in gold.

Is this thy soft family love?  
 Thy cruel patriarchal pride?  
 Planting thy family alone,  
 Destroying all the world beside?

A man's worst enemies are those  
 Of his own house and family:  
 And he who makes his law a curse  
 By his own law shall surely die.

In my exchanges every land  
 Shall walk; and mine in every land,  
 Mutual, shall build Jerusalem,  
 Both heart in heart and hand in hand.

## III.

## TO THE DEISTS.



SAW a Monk of Charlemagne  
 Arise before my sight:  
 I talked with the Grey Monk as we  
 stood  
 In beams of infernal light.

Gibbon arose with a lash of steel,  
And Voltaire with a racking wheel :  
The Schools, in clouds of learning rolled,  
Arose with War in iron and gold.

“Thou lazy Monk,” they sound afar,  
“In vain condemning glorious war !  
And in your cell you shall ever dwell :—  
Rise, War, and bind him in his cell !”

The blood red ran from the Grey Monk's side,  
His hands and feet were wounded wide,  
His body bent, his arms and knees  
Like to the roots of ancient trees.

When Satan first the black bow bent,  
And the Moral Law from the Gospel rent,  
He forged the Law into a sword,  
And spilled the blood of Mercy's Lord.

Titus ! Constantine ! Charlemagne !  
O Voltaire ! Rousseau ! Gibbon ! Vain  
Your Grecian mocks and Roman sword  
Against the image of his Lord.

For a tear is an intellectual thing,  
And a sigh is the sword of an Angel King  
And the bitter groan of a martyr's woe  
Is an arrow from the Almighty's bow.

## IV.

## TO THE CHRISTIANS.



GIVE you the end of a golden string  
 Only wind it into a ball,—  
 It will lead you in at Heaven's gate  
 Built in Jerusalem's wall.

I stood among my valleys of the south,  
 And saw a flame of fire, even as a wheel  
 Of fire surrounding all the heavens: it went  
 From west to east against the current of  
 Creation, and devoured all things in its loud  
 Fury and thundering course round heaven and  
 earth.

By it the sun was rolled into an orb;  
 By it the moon faded into a globe  
 Travelling through the night: for, from its dire  
 And restless fury Man himself shrunk up  
 Into a little root a fathom long.  
 And I asked a Watcher and a Holy-one  
 Its name. He answered: "It is the wheel of  
 Religion."

I wept and said: "Is this the law of Jesus,—  
 This terrible devouring sword turning every way?"  
 He answered: "Jesus died because he strove  
 Against the current of this wheel: its name  
 Is Caiaphas, the dark preacher of Death,

Of sin, of sorrow, and of punishment ;  
Opposing Nature : It is Natural Religion.  
But Jesus is the bright preacher of Life,  
Creating Nature from this fiery Law,  
By self-denial and forgiveness of sin.  
Go therefore, cast out devils in Christ's name,  
Heal thou the sick of spiritual disease,  
Pity the evil : for thou art not sent  
To smite with terror and with punishments  
Those that are sick, like to the pharisees  
Crucifying and encompassing sea and land  
For proselytes to tyranny and wrath.  
But to the publicans and harlots go :  
Teach them true happiness, but let no curse  
Go forth out of thy mouth to blight their peace :  
For Hell is opened to Heaven : thine eyes behold  
The dungeons burst, and the prisoners set free."

England ! awake ! awake ! awake !  
Jerusalem thy sister calls !  
Why wilt thou sleep the sleep of death,  
And close her from thy ancient walls ?

Thy hills and valleys felt her feet  
Gently upon their bosoms move :  
Thy gates beheld sweet Zion's ways ;  
Then was a time of joy and love.

And now the time returns again :  
Our souls exult ; and London's towers  
Receive the Lamb of God to dwell  
In England's green and pleasant bowers.

## FROM THE PROPHETIC BOOK "MILTON."

(ENGRAVED 1804.)



AND did those feet in ancient time  
 Walk upon England's mountain  
 green?  
 And was the holy Lamb of God  
 On England's pleasant pastures seen?

And did the countenance divine  
 Shine forth upon our clouded hills?  
 And was Jerusalem builded here  
 Among these dark Satanic mills?

Bring me my bow of burning gold!  
 Bring me my arrows of desire!  
 Bring me my spear: O clouds, unfold!  
 Bring me my chariot of fire!

I will not cease from mental fight,  
 Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,  
 Till we have built Jerusalem  
 In England's green and pleasant land.



DEDICATION OF THE DESIGNS TO  
BLAIR'S "GRAVE."

TO QUEEN CHARLOTTE.



HE door of Death is made of gold,  
That mortal eyes cannot behold:  
But, when the mortal eyes are closed,  
And cold and pale the limbs reposed,  
The soul awakes, and, wondering, sees  
In her mild hand the golden keys.  
The grave is heaven's golden gate,  
And rich and poor around it wait:  
O Shepherdess of England's fold,  
Behold this gate of pearl and gold!

To dedicate to England's Queen  
The visions that my soul has seen,  
And by her kind permission bring  
What I have borne on solemn wing  
From the vast regions of the grave,  
Before her throne my wings I wave,  
Bowing before my sovereign's feet.  
The Grave produced these blossoms sweet,  
In mild repose from earthly strife;  
The blossoms of eternal life.



THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL.<sup>1</sup>

HE vision of Christ that thou dost see  
 Is my vision's greatest enemy.  
 Thine is the friend of all mankind;  
 Mine speaks in parables to the blind.

<sup>1</sup> This wholly amazing and partly splendid poem is now published in full for the first time. The greater part of it, however, appears in Mr. Swinburne's book, *William Blake, a Critical Essay*, in detached extracts, with intermixed comment: one extract from it had also been given in Gilchrist's *Life of Blake*. The MS. of the poem is in the autograph volume belonging to D. G. Rossetti. It is scattered up and down over many pages; sometimes written neatly enough, and consecutively; at other times, barely legible. Here a passage is scratched out or interpolated: there a passage already met with reappears with variations. I have done my best to arrange the verses into some sort of order and method; with what success, the reader must judge. The poem would appear to be completed by Blake in the evolution of some of its passages, but certainly not of the whole.

As regards the dates of the numerous compositions extracted from the same autograph volume, it may be observed that six items distinctly dated by Blake's own hand appear in that book, the earliest appertaining to the year 1793, and the latest to 1811. Even without these positive indications, it is evident, from the spacious range in Blake's life and work covered by the contents of the volume, that it was in use for many successive years. Beyond this intimation, I have not thought it requisite to try to arrange in order of date the poems contained in the autograph volume. They include the poem *Lafayette*, and extend from the present point down to the verses *In a Myrtle Shade*; and then from *Mammon to The Will and the Way*. They include also the *Couplets and Fragments*, and the *Epigrams and Satirical Pieces on Art and Artists*, with very few exceptions.



Thine loves the same world that mine hates ;  
 Thy heaven-doors are my hell-gates.  
 Socrates taught what Meletus  
 Loathed as a nation's bitterest curse ;  
 And Caiaphas was, in his own mind,  
 A benefactor to mankind.  
 Both read the bible day and night ;  
 But thou read'st black where I read white.



Was Jesus born of a virgin pure,  
 With narrow soul and looks demure ?  
 If he intended to take on sin,  
 His mother should an harlot have been ;  
 Just such a one as Magdalen,  
 With seven devils in her pen.  
 Or were Jew virgins still more curst,  
 And more sucking devils nursed ?  
 Or what was it which he took on,  
 That he might bring salvation ?  
 A body subject to be tempted,  
 From neither pain nor grief exempted,—  
 Or such a body as might not feel  
 The passions that with sinners deal ?  
 Yes, but they say he never fell :—  
 Ask Caiaphas, for he can tell.  
 “ He mocked the sabbath, and he mocked  
 The sabbath's God, and he unlocked  
 The evil spirits from their shrines,  
 And turned fishermen to divines,  
 O'returned the tent of secret sins,  
 And its golden cords and pins :

'Tis the bloody shrine of war,  
Poured around from star to star,—  
Halls of justice hating vice,  
Where the devil combs his lice.  
He turned the devils into swine,  
That he might tempt the Jews to dine;  
Since when, a pig has got a look  
That for a Jew may be mistook.  
'Obey your parents.' What says he?  
'Woman, what have I to do with thee?  
No earthly parents I confess,—  
I am doing my Father's business.'  
He scorned earth's parents, scorned earth's God  
And mocked the one and the other rod;  
His seventy disciples sent  
Against religion and government.  
They by the sword of justice fell,  
And him their cruel murderer tell.  
He left his father's trade, to roam  
A wandering vagrant without home:  
And thus he others' labour stole,  
That he might live above control.  
The publicans and harlots he  
Selected for his company,  
And from the adulteress turned away  
God's righteous law, that lost its prey."



Was Jesus chaste, or did he  
Give any lessons of chastity?  
The morning blushed fiery red,  
Mary was found in adulterous bed.

Earth groaned beneath, and heaven above  
Trembled at discovery of love.  
Jesus was sitting in Moses' chair ;  
They brought the trembling woman there.  
Moses commands she be stoned to death :  
What was the sound of Jesus' breath ?  
He laid his hand on Moses' law ;  
The ancient heavens, in silent awe,  
Writ with curses from pole to pole,  
All away began to roll.  
The Earth trembling and naked lay  
In secret bed of mortal clay ;  
On Sinai felt the hand divine  
Putting back the bloody shrine ;  
And she heard the breath of God,  
As she heard by Eden's flood.  
" Good and evil are no more :  
Sinai's trumpets, cease to roar ;  
Cease, finger of God, to write  
The heavens are not clean in thy sight.  
Thou art good, and thou alone,  
Nor may the sinner cast one stone.  
To be good only is to be  
A God, or else a pharisee.  
Thou angel of the presence divine,  
That didst create this body of mine  
Wherefore hast thou writ these laws,  
And created hell's dark jaws ?  
My presence I will take from thee :  
A cold leper thou shalt be.  
Though thou wast so pure and bright  
That heaven was impure in thy sight,  
Though thine oath turned heaven pale,

Though thy covenant built hell's jail,  
 Though thou didst all to chaos roll  
 With the serpent for its soul,—  
 Still the breath divine does move,  
 And the breath divine is love.—  
 Mary, fear not. Let me see  
 The seven devils that torment thee.  
 Hide not from my sight thy sin,  
 That forgiveness thou mayst win.  
 Hath no man condemnèd thee?—  
 “No man, Lord.”—“Then what is he  
 Who shall accuse thee? Come ye forth,  
 Fallen fiends of heavenly birth,  
 That have forgot your ancient love,  
 And driven away my trembling dove!  
 You shall bow before her feet;  
 You shall lick the dust for meat;  
 And, though you cannot love but hate,  
 Shall be beggars at love's gate.—  
 What was thy love? Let me see't:  
 Was it love, or dark deceit?”  
 “Love too long from me has fled:  
 'Twas dark deceit, to earn my bread;  
 'Twas covet, or 'twas custom, or  
 Some trifle not worth caring for;  
 That they may call a shame and sin  
 Love's temple that God dwelleth in,  
 And hide in secret hidden shrine  
 The naked human form divine,  
 And render that a lawless thing  
 On which the soul expands her wing.  
 But this, O Lord, this was my sin—  
 When first I let those devils in,

In dark pretence to chastity,  
Blaspheming love, blaspheming thee.  
Thence rose secret adulteries,  
And thence did covet also rise.  
My sin thou hast forgiven me :  
Canst thou forgive my blasphemy ?  
Canst thou return to this dark hell,  
And in my burning bosom dwell ?  
And canst thou die, that I may live ?  
And canst thou pity and forgive ?”



Was Jesus humble, or did he  
Give any proofs of humility,  
Boast of high things with humble tone,  
And give with charity a stone ?  
When but a child he ran away,  
And left his parents in dismay.  
When they had wandered three days long,  
These were the words upon his tongue :  
“ No earthly parents I confess ;  
I am doing my Father’s business.”  
When the rich learned Pharisee  
Came to consult him secretly,  
Upon his heart with iron pen  
He wrote “ Ye must be born again.”  
He was too proud to take a bribe ;  
He spoke with authority, not like a scribe.  
He says with most consummate art,  
“ Follow me, I am meek and lowly of heart :”  
As that is the only way to escape  
The miser’s net and the glutton’s trap.

He who loves his enemies hates his friends ;  
 This surely is not what Jesus intends,—  
 But the sneaking pride of heroic schools,  
 And the scribes' and pharisees' virtuous rules  
 For he acts with honest triumphant pride,—  
 And this is the cause that Jesus died.  
 He did not die with christian ease,  
 Asking pardon of his enemies :  
 If he had, Caiaphas would forgive,—  
 Sneaking submission can always live.  
 He had only to say that God was the Devil,  
 And the Devil was God, like a christian civil,  
 Mild christian regrets to the Devil confess  
 For affronting him thrice in the wilderness,—  
 He had soon been bloody Cæsar's elf,  
 And at last would have been Cæsar himself.

John from the wilderness loud cried :  
 Satan gloried in his pride.  
 " Come," said Satan, " come away :  
 I'll soon see if you'll obey !  
 John for disobedience bled,  
 But you can turn the stones to bread.  
 God's high king and God's high priest  
 Shall plant their glories in your breast,  
 If Caiaphas you will obey,  
 If Herod you with bloody prey  
 Feed with the sacrifice, and be  
 Obedient :—Fall down, worship me."

Thunders and lightning broke around,  
 And Jesus' voice in thunder's sound.  
 " Thus I seize the spiritual prey :

Ye smiters with disease, make way !  
 I come your King and God to seize :  
 Is God a smiter with disease ?”

The god of this world raged in vain :  
 He bound old Satan in his chain ;  
 And, bursting forth, his furious ire  
 Became a chariot of fire.  
 Throughout the land he took his course,  
 And traced diseases to their source :  
 He cursed the scribe and pharisee,  
 Trampling down hypocrisy.  
 Where'er his chariot took its way,  
 The gates of death let in the day,  
 Broke down from every chain and bar ;  
 And Satan, in his spiritual war,  
 Dragged at his chariot-wheels. Loud howled  
 The god of this world ; louder rolled  
 The chariot-wheels ; and louder still  
 His voice was heard from Zion's hill.  
 And in his hand the scourge shone bright :  
 He scourged the merchant Canaanite  
 From out the temple of his mind,  
 And in his body tight does bind  
 Satan and all his hellish crew.  
 And thus with wrath he did subdue  
 The serpent bulk of Nature's dross,  
 Till he had nailed it to the cross.  
 He took on sin in the virgin's womb,  
 And put it off on the cross and tomb.

~~\_\_\_\_\_~~  
 To be written by the church of Rome

What was he doing all that time

From twelve years old to manly prime ?  
 Was he then idle, or the less  
 About his Father's business ?  
 Or was his wisdom held in scorn  
 Before his wrath began to burn  
 In miracles throughout the land,  
 That quite unnerved the seraph's hand ?  
 If he had been Antichrist aping Jesus,  
 He'd have done anything to please us ;  
 Gone sneaking into synagogues,  
 And not used the elders and priests like dogs,  
 But humble as a lamb or ass  
 Obeyed himself to Caiaphas.  
 God wants not man to humble himself :  
 That is the trick of the ancient Elf.

This is the race that Jesus ran ;—  
 Humble to God, haughty to man ;  
 Cursing the rulers before the people  
 Even to the temple's highest steeple :  
 And, when he humbled himself to God,  
 Then descended the cruel rod.

" If thou humblest thyself, thou humblest me.  
 Thou also dwell'st in eternity.  
 Thou art a man : God is no more :  
 Thine own humanity learn to adore,—  
 For that is my spirit of life.  
 Awake, arise to spiritual strife !  
 And thy revenge abroad display  
 In terror at the ~~Last Judgment Day.~~  
 God's mercy and long-suffering  
 Are but the sinner to judgment to bring.



Thou on the cross for them shalt pray,  
And take revenge at the last day."

Jesus replied, and thunders hurled :  
" I never will pray for the world.  
Once I did so when I prayed in the garden ;  
I wished to take with me a bodily pardon."

Can that which was of woman born  
In the absence of the morn,  
When the soul fell into sleep,  
And archangels round it weep,  
Shooting out against the light  
Fibres of a deadly night,  
Reasoning upon its own dark fiction,  
In doubt which is self-contradiction . . . ?  
Humility is only doubt,  
And does the sun and moon blot out,  
Roofing over with thorns and stems  
The buried soul and all its gems.  
This life's dim window of the soul  
Distorts the heavens from pole to pole,  
And leads you to believe a lie  
When you see with—not through—the eye,—  
That was born in a night, to perish in a night,  
When the soul slept in the beams of light.

But, when Jesus was crucified,  
Then was perfected his galling pride.  
Then rolled the shadowy man away  
From the limbs of Jesus, to make them his prey,  
An ever-devouring appetite  
Glittering with festering venoms bright.  
Crying, " Crucify this cause of distress,

Who don't keep the secrets of holiness !  
 All mental powers with diseases we bind :  
 But he heals the deaf and the dumb and the blind,  
 Whom God has afflicted for secret ends ;  
 He comforts and heals and calls them friends."

What can be done with such desperate fools  
 Who follow after the heathen schools ?  
 I was standing by when Jesus died :  
 What they called humility I called pride.  
 In three nights he devoured his prey,  
 And still he devours the body of clay ;  
 For dust and clay is the serpent's meat,  
 Which never was made for man to eat.



Did Jesus teach doubt, or did he  
 Give lessons of philosophy ?  
 Charge visionaries with deceiving,  
 Or call men wise for not believing,—  
 Like Doctor Priestley, Bacon, and Newton ?  
 Poor spiritual knowledge is not worth a button !  
 For thus the Gospel Saint Isaac confutes ;  
 " God can only be known by his attributes ;  
 And, as to the indwelling of the Holy Ghost,  
 Or of Christ and the Father, it's all a boast,  
 And pride and vanity of imagination,  
 That disdains to follow this world's fashion."  
 To teach doubt and experiment  
 Certainly was not what Christ meant.




I'm sure this Jesus will not do  
 Either for Englishman or Jew.



## THE BIRDS.

HE.

HERE thou dwellest, in what grove,  
Tell me, fair one, tell me, love ;  
Where thou thy charming nest dost  
build,  
O thou pride of every field !

SHE.

Yonder stands a lonely tree :  
There I live and mourn for thee.  
Morning drinks my silent tear,  
And evening winds my sorrow bear.

HE.

O thou summer's harmony,  
I have lived and mourned for thee ;  
Each day I moan along the wood,  
And night hath heard my sorrows loud.

SHE.

Dost thou truly long for me ?  
And am I thus sweet to thee ?  
Sorrow now is at an end,  
O my lover and my friend !

HE.

Come ! on wings of joy we'll fly  
To where my bower is hung on high ;  
Come, and make thy calm retreat  
Among green leaves and blossoms sweet.

BROKEN LOVE.<sup>1</sup>

**M**Y Spectre around me night and day  
 Like a wild beast guards my way;  
 My Emanation far within  
 Weeps incessantly for my sin.

<sup>1</sup> Dante G. Rossetti, writing in the *Life of Blake* by Gilchrist, has offered the following elucidation of this poem:—  
 “Never perhaps have the agony and perversity of sundered affection been more powerfully (however singularly) expressed than in the piece called *Broken Love*. The speaker is one whose soul has been intensified by pain to be his only world, among the scenes, figures, and events of which he moves as in a new state of being. The emotions have been quickened and isolated by conflicting torment, till each is a separate companion. There is his ‘spectre,’ the jealous pride which scents in the snow the footsteps of the beloved rejected woman, but is a wild beast to guard his way from reaching her; his ‘emanation’ which silently weeps within him, for has not he also sinned? So they wander together in ‘a fathomless and boundless deep,’ the morn full of tempests and the night of tears. Let her weep, he says, not for his sins only, but for her own; nay, he will cast his sins upon her shoulders too; they shall be more and more till she come to him again. Also this woe of his can array itself in stately imagery. He can count separately how many of his soul’s affections the knife she stabbed it with has slain, how many yet mourn over the tombs which he has built for these: he can tell, too, of some that still watch around his bed, bright sometimes with ecstatic passion of melancholy, and crowning his mournful head with vine. All these living forgive her transgressions: when will she look upon them, that the dead may live again? Has she not pity to give for pardon? nay, does he not need her pardon too? He cannot seek her, but oh if she would return! Surely her place is ready for her, and bread and wine of forgiveness of sins.” Mr. Swin-

A fathomless and boundless deep,  
There we wander, there we weep ;  
On the hungry craving wind  
My Spectre follows thee behind.

He scents thy footsteps in the snow,  
Wheresoever thou dost go ;  
Through the wintry hail and rain  
When wilt thou return again ?

Poor pale pitiable form  
That I follow in a storm,  
From sin I never shall be free  
Till thou forgive and come to me.

A deep winter dark and cold  
Within my heart thou dost unfold ;  
Iron tears and groans of lead  
Thou bind'st around my aching head.

Dost thou not in pride and scorn  
Fill with tempests all my morn,  
And with jealousies and fears ?—  
And fill my pleasant nights with tears ?

O'er *my* sins thou dost sit and moan :  
Hast thou no sins of thine own ?  
O'er *my* sins thou dost sit and weep,  
And lull thine own sins fast asleep.

---

burne, in his work, *William Blake, a Critical Essay* (p. 278), attributes a more theoretical and mystical meaning to the poem, which he surmises to have been intended to form part of some sequel to the " prophetic book " *Jerusalem*.

Thy weeping thou shalt ne'er give o'er :  
I sin against thee more and more,  
And never will from sin be free  
Till thou forgive and come to me.

What transgressions I commit  
Are for thy transgressions fit,—  
They thy harlots, thou their slave ;  
And my bed becomes their grave.

Seven of my sweet loves thy knife  
Hath bereavèd of their life :  
Their marble tombs I built with tears  
And with cold and shadowy fears.

Seven more loves weep night and day  
Round the tombs where my loves lay,  
And seven more loves attend at night  
Around my couch with torches bright.

And seven more loves in my bed  
Crown with vine my mournful head ;  
Pitying and forgiving all  
Thy transgressions, great and small.

When wilt thou return, and view  
My loves, and them in life renew ?  
When wilt thou return and live ?  
When wilt thou pity as I forgive ?

Throughout all eternity  
I forgive you, you forgive me.  
As our dear Redeemer said :  
"This the wine, and this the bread."

THE TWO SONGS.<sup>1</sup>

HEARD an Angel singing  
 When the day was springing :  
 " Mercy, pity, and peace,  
 Are the world's release."

So he sang all day  
 Over the new-mown hay,  
 Till the sun went down,  
 And haycocks looked brown.

I heard a Devil curse  
 Over the heath and the furse :  
 " Mercy could be no more  
 If there were nobody poor,  
 And pity no more could be  
 If all were happy as ye :  
 And mutual fear brings peace.  
 Misery's increase  
 Are mercy, pity, peace."

At his curse the sun went down,  
 And the heavens gave a frown.

---

<sup>1</sup> Some portions of this lyric resemble the opening of *The Human Abstract*, p. 111.

## THE DEFILED SANCTUARY.



SAW a chapel all of gold  
That none did dare to enter in  
And many weeping stood without  
Weeping, mourning, worshipin

I saw a serpent rise between  
The white pillars of the door,  
And he forced and forced and forced  
Till he the golden hinges tore :

And along the pavement sweet,  
Set with pearls and rubies bright,  
All his shining length he drew,—  
Till upon the altar white

He vomited his poison out  
On the bread and on the wine.  
So I turned into a sty,  
And laid me down among the swine.





## CUPID.

**W**HY was Cupid a boy,  
 And why a boy was he?  
 He should have been a girl,  
 For aught that I can see.

For he shoots with his bow,  
 And the girl shoots with her eye;  
 And they both are merry and glad,  
 And laugh when we do cry.

Then to make Cupid a boy  
 Was surely a woman's plan,  
 For a boy never learns so much  
 Till he has become a man:

And then he's so pierced with cares,  
 And wounded with arrowy smarts,  
 That the whole business of his life  
 Is to pick out the heads of the darts.


## LOVE'S SECRET.

**N**EVER seek to tell thy love,  
 Love that never told can be;  
 For the gentle wind doth move  
 Silently, invisibly.

I told my love, I told my love,  
 I told her all my heart,  
 Trembling, cold, in ghastly fears.  
 Ah! she did depart!

Soon after she was gone from me,  
 A traveller came by,  
 Silently, invisibly:  
 He took her with a sigh.

#### THE WILD FLOWER'S SONG.

S I wandered in the forest  
 The green leaves among,  
 I heard a wild-flower  
 Singing a song.

“ I slept in the earth  
 In the silent night;  
 I murmured my thoughts,  
 And I felt delight.

“ In the morning I went,  
 As rosy as morn,  
 To seek for new joy,  
 But I met with scorn.”



## THE GOLDEN NET.

**B**ENEATH a white-thorn's lovely may,  
 Three virgins at the break of day.—  
 “Whither, young man, whither away?  
 Alas for woe! alas for woe!”

They cry, and tears for ever flow.  
 The first was clothed in flames of fire,  
 The second clothed in iron wire;  
 The third was clothed in tears and sighs,  
 Dazzling bright before my eyes.  
 They bore a net of golden twine  
 To hang upon the branches fine.  
 Pitying I wept to see the woe  
 That love and beauty undergo—  
 To be clothed in burning fires  
 And in ungratified desires,  
 And in tears clothed night and day;  
 It melted all my soul away.  
 When they saw my tears, a smile  
 That might heaven itself beguile  
 Bore the golden net aloft,  
 As on downy pinions soft,  
 Over the morning of my day.  
 Underneath the net I stray,  
 Now entreating Flaming-fire  
 Now entreating Iron-wire,  
 Now entreating Tears-and-sighs.—  
 Oh when will the morning rise?

## SCOFFERS.

**M**OCK on, mock on, Voltaire, Rousseau,  
 Mock on, mock on ; 'tis all in vain ;  
 You throw the sand against the wind,  
 And the wind blows it back again.

And every sand becomes a gem,  
 Reflected in the beams divine ;  
 Blown back, they blind the mocking eye,  
 But still in Israel's paths they shine.

The atoms of Democritus  
 And Newton's particles of light  
 Are sands upon the Red Sea shore  
 Where Israel's tents do shine so bright.

THE GREY MONK.<sup>1</sup>

**M**“DIE, I die,” the Mother said,  
 “My children die for lack of bread !  
 What more has the merciless tyrant  
 said ?”

The Monk sat him down on her stony bed.

---

<sup>1</sup> See the verses *To the Deists*, with which the present poem corresponds to some extent.

e blood red ran from the Grey Monk's side,  
 s hands and feet were wounded wide,  
 s body bent, his arms and knees  
 ke to the roots of ancient trees,

s eye was dry, no tear could flow,  
 hollow groan bespoke his woe ;  
 : trembled and shuddered upon the bed ;  
 length with a feeble cry he said :—

When God commanded this hand to write  
 the shadowy hours of deep midnight,  
 : told me that all I wrote should prove  
 e bane of all that on earth I love.

My brother starved between two walls,  
 s children's cry my soul appalls ;—  
 nocked at the rack and the grinding chain,—  
 ' bent body mocks at their torturing pain.


Thy father drew his sword in the north,  
 th his thousands strong he is marched forth ;  
 y brother hath armed himself in steel,  
 revenge the wrongs thy children feel.

But vain the sword, and vain the bow,—  
 ey never can work war's overthrow ;  
 e hermit's prayer and the widow's tear  
 one can free the world from fear.

For a tear is an intellectual thing,  
 nd a sigh is the sword of an angel king ;  
 nd the bitter groan of a martyr's woe  
 an arrow from the Almighty's bow."


The hand of vengeance found the bed  
 To which the purple tyrant fled ;  
 The iron hand crushed the tyrant's head,  
 And became a tyrant in his stead.

## DAYBREAK.

 O find the western path,  
 Right through the gates of wrath  
 I urge my way ;  
 Sweet morning leads me on ;  
 With soft repentant moan  
 I see the break of day.


The war of swords and spears,  
 Melted by dewy tears,  
 Exhales on high ;  
 The sun is freed from fears,  
 And with soft grateful tears  
 Ascends the sky.

## THAMES AND OHIO.

 HY should I care for the men of Tham  
 And the cheating waters of charted  
 streams,  
 Or shrink at the little blasts of fear  
 That the hireling blows into mine ear ?


ough born on the cheating banks of Thames—  
 ough his waters bathed my infant limbs—  
 e Ohio shall wash his stains from me ;  
 was born a slave, but I go to be free.

YOUNG LOVE.

RE not the joys of morning sweeter  
 Than the joys of night ?  
 And are the vigorous joys of youth  
 Ashamed of the light ?

Let age and sickness silent rob  
 The vineyard in the night ;  
 But those who burn with vigorous youth  
 Pluck fruits before the light.

RICHES.

INCE all the riches of this world  
 May be gifts from the devil and  
 earthly kings,  
 I should suspect that I worshiped the  
 devil  
 If I thanked my God for worldly things.

The countless gold of a merry heart,  
 The rubies and pearls of a loving eye,  
 The idle man never can bring to the mart,  
 Nor the cunning hoard up in his treasury.

## OPPORTUNITY.



HE who bends to himself a joy  
 Does the winged life destroy ;  
 But he who kisses the joy as it flies  
 Lives in eternity's sunrise.

If you trap the moment before it's ripe,  
 The tears of repentance you'll certainly wipe ;  
 But, if once you let the ripe moment go,  
 You can never wipe off the tears of woe.

## SEED-SOWING.



HOU hast a lapful of seed,  
 And this is a fair country.  
 Why dost thou not cast thy seed,  
 And live in it merrily ?”

“ Shall I cast it on the sand,  
 And turn it into fruitful land ?  
 For on no other ground can I sow my seed  
 Without tearing up some stinking weed.”



## BARREN BLOSSOM.



FEARED the fury of my wind  
 Would blight all blossoms fair and  
 true;  
 And my sun it shined and shined,  
 And my wind it never blew.

But a blossom fair or true  
 Was not found on any tree;  
 For all blossoms grew and grew  
 Fruitless, false, though fair to see.

## NIGHT AND DAY.



SILENT, silent Night,  
 Quench the holy light  
 Of thy torches bright;

For, possessed of Day,  
 Thousand spirits stray  
 That sweet joys betray.

Why should joys be sweet  
 Usèd with deceit,  
 Nor with sorrows meet?

But an honest joy  
 Doth itself destroy  
 For a harlot coy.

## IN A MYRTLE SHADE.



O a lovely myrtle bound,  
 Blossoms showering all around,  
 Oh how weak and weary I  
 Underneath my myrtle lie !

Why should I be bound to thee,  
 O my lovely myrtle-tree ?  
 Love, free love, cannot be bound  
 To any tree that grows on ground.

## FOR A PICTURE OF THE LAST JUDGMENT.

## DEDICATION.



THE caverns of the Grave I've seen,  
 And these I showed to England's  
 Queen ;<sup>1</sup>

But now the caves of Hell I view,—  
 Whom shall I dare to show them to ?  
 What mighty soul in beauty's form  
 Shall dauntless view the infernal storm ?  
 Egremont's Countess can control  
 The flames of hell that round me roll.

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<sup>1</sup> See the Dedication (addressed to Queen Charlotte) of the illustrations to Blair's *Grave*.

If she refuse, I still go on,  
 Till the heavens and earth are gone ;  
 Still admired by noble minds,  
 Followed by Envy on the winds.  
 Re-engraved time after time,  
 Ever in their youthful prime,  
 My designs unchanged remain ;  
 Time may rage, but rage in vain ;  
 For above Time's troubled fountains,  
 On the great Atlantic mountains,  
 In my golden house on high,  
 There they shine eternally.

## MAMMON.



ROSE up at the dawn of day.—  
 “Get thee away! get thee away!  
 Pray'st thou for riches? Away! away!  
 This is the throne of Mammon grey.”

Said I: “This, sure, is very odd ;  
 I took it to be the throne of God.  
 Everything besides I have :  
 It's only riches that I *can* crave.

“I have mental joys and mental health,  
 Mental friends and mental wealth ;  
 I've a wife that I love, and that loves me ;  
 I've all but riches bodily.

## BLAKE'S POEMS.

• What if for riches I must not pray,  
And know it's his riches I need say  
I am in need's possession night and day;  
He never turns his back away.

• The number of sins in my side doth stand,  
And he holds my money-bag in his hand;  
For my worldly things God makes him pay;  
And he'll pay for more, if to him I would pray.


• He says, if I worship him for a god,  
I shall eat manna here, and go worse shod;  
For he'll not value such things as these,  
You must hit Mr. Devil, just as God please."

## FATHER OF JEALOUSY.

**W**HY art thou silent and invisible,  
Father of Jealousy?  
Why dost thou hide thyself in clouds  
From every searching eye?

Why darkness and obscurity  
In all thy words and laws,—  
That none dare eat the fruit but from  
The wily serpent's jaws?  
Or is it because secrecy  
Gains females' loud applause?

## IDOLATRY.


**I**F it is true, what the Prophets write,  
 That the Heathen Gods are all stocks  
 and stones,  
 Shall we, for the sake of being polite,  
 Feed them with the juice of our marrow-bones?

And, if Bezaleel and Aholiab<sup>1</sup> drew  
 What the finger of God pointed to their view,  
 Shall we suffer the Roman and Grecian rods  
 To compel us to worship them as Gods?

They stole them from  
 The Temple of the Lord,  
 And worshiped them that they might make  
 Inspired art abhorred.

The wood and stone were called the holy things,  
 And their sublime intent given to their kings ;  
 All the atonements of Jehovah spurned,  
 And criminals to sacrifices turned.

---

<sup>1</sup> The artificers of the decorations to the Mosaic tabernacle. See *Exodus*, chap. 31.





## THE WILL AND THE WAY.



ASKED a thief to steal me a peach:  
 He turned up his eyes.  
 I asked a lithe lady to lie her down:  
 Holy and meek, she cries.

As soon as I went,  
 An Angel came.  
 He winked at the thief,  
 And smiled at the dame;

And, without one word spoke,  
 Had a peach from the tree,  
 And 'twixt earnest and joke  
 Enjoyed the lady.

THE CRYSTAL CABINET.<sup>1</sup>

HE maiden caught me in the wild,  
 Where I was dancing merrily;  
 She put me into her cabinet,  
 And locked me up with a golden key.

---

<sup>1</sup> This poem seems to me to represent under a very ideal form the phenomena of gestation and birth. Mr. Swinburne has suggested a different explanation; and another again is offered in the 2nd volume of Gilchrist's book.

This cabinet is formed of gold,  
And pearl and crystal shining bright,  
And within it opens into a world  
And a little lovely moony night.

Another England there I saw,  
Another London with its Tower,  
Another Thames and other hills,  
And another pleasant Surrey bower.

Another maiden like herself,  
Translucent, lovely, shining clear,  
Threefold, each in the other closed,—  
Oh what a pleasant trembling fear!

Oh what a smile! A threefold smile  
Filled me that like a flame I burned;  
I bent to kiss the lovely maid,  
And found a threefold kiss returned.<sup>1</sup>

I strove to seize the inmost form  
With ardour fierce and hands of flame,  
But burst the crystal cabinet,  
And like a weeping babe became:

A weeping babe upon the wild,  
And weeping woman pale reclined,  
And in the outward air again  
'I filled with woes the passing wind.

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<sup>1</sup> See the close of the *Verses*, p. 133; also the passage from the *Descriptive Catalogue* quoted at p. cxxv. of my Prefatory Memoir.

## SMILE AND FROWN.



HERE is a smile of Love,  
 And there is a smile of Deceit,  
 And there is a smile of smiles  
 In which these two smiles meet.

And there is a frown of Hate,  
 And there is a frown of Disdain,  
 And there is a frown of frowns  
 Which you strive to forget in vain,

For it sticks in the heart's deep core  
 And it sticks in the deep backbone.  
 And no smile ever was smiled  
 But only one smile alone

(And betwixt the cradle and grave  
 It only once smiled can be)  
 That when it once is smiled  
 There's an end to all misery.

## THE LAND OF DREAMS.



WAKE, awake, my little boy!  
 Thou wast thy mother's only joy.  
 Why dost thou weep in thy gentl  
 sleep?

Oh wake! thy father doth thee keep.




“Oh what land is the land of dreams?  
 What are its mountains and what are its streams?”  
 “Oh father! I saw my mother there,  
 Among the lilies by waters fair.

Among the lambs clothèd in white,  
 he walked with her Thomas in sweet delight.  
 wept for joy, like a dove I mourn—  
 h when shall I again return?”

Dear child! I also by pleasant streams  
 ave wandered all night in the land of dreams;  
 at, though calm and warm the waters wide,  
 could not get to the other side.”

Father, O father! what do we here,  
 a this land of unbelief and fear?  
 he land of dreams is better far,  
 bove the light of the morning star.”

## MARY.

WEET Mary, the first time she ever  
 was there,  
 Came into the ball-room among the  
 fair;  
 The young men and maidens around her throng,  
 And these are the words upon every tongue:

“ An angel is here from the heavenly climes,  
Or again return the golden times ;  
Her eyes outshine every brilliant ray,  
She opens her lips—'tis the month of May.”

Mary moves in soft beauty and conscious delight,  
To augment with sweet smiles all the joys of the  
    night,  
Nor once blushes to own to the rest of the fair  
That sweet love and beauty are worthy our care.

In the morning the villagers rose with delight,  
And repeated with pleasure the joys of the night,  
And Mary arose among friends to be free,  
But no friend from henceforward thou, Mary, shalt  
    see.

Some said she was proud, some called her a whore,  
And some when she passed by shut-to the door ;  
A damp cold came o'er her, her blushes all fled,  
Her lilies and roses are blighted and shed.

“ Oh why was I born with a different face ?  
Why was I not born like this envious race ?  
Why did Heaven adorn me with bountiful hand,  
And then set me down in an envious land ?

“ To be weak as a lamb and smooth as a dove,  
And not to raise envy, is called Christian love ;  
But, if you raise envy, your merit's to blame  
For planting such spite in the weak and the tame,

“ I will humble my beauty, I will not dress fine,  
I will keep from the ball, and my eyes shall not  
shine ;  
And, if any girl’s lover forsake her for me,  
I’ll refuse him my hand, and from envy be free.”

She went out in the morning attired plain and  
neat ;  
“ Proud Mary’s gone mad,” said the child in the  
street ;  
She went out in the morning in plain neat attire,  
And came home in the evening bespattered with  
mire.

She trembled and wept, sitting on the bedside,  
She forgot it was night, and she trembled and cried ;  
She forgot it was night, she forgot it was morn,  
Her soft memory imprinted with faces of scorn ;

With faces of scorn and with eyes of disdain,  
Like foul fiends inhabiting Mary’s mild brain ;  
She remembers no face like the human divine ;  
All faces have envy, sweet Mary, but thine.

And thine is a face of sweet love in despair,  
And thine is a face of mild sorrow and care,  
And thine is a face of wild terror and fear  
That shall never be quiet till laid on its bier.



## AUGURIES OF INNOCENCE.



*O see a world in a grain of sand,  
And a heaven in a wild flower;  
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand,  
And eternity in an hour.*

A Robin Redbreast in a cage  
Puts all Heaven in a rage;  
A dove-house filled with doves and pigeons  
Shudders hell through all its regions.  
A dog starved at his master's gate  
Predicts the ruin of the state;  
A game-cock clipped and armed for fight  
Doth the rising sun affright;  
A horse misused upon the road  
Calls to Heaven for human blood.  
Every wolf's and lion's howl  
Raises from hell a human soul;  
Each outcry of the hunted hare  
A fibre from the brain doth tear;  
A skylark wounded on the wing  
Doth make a cherub cease to sing.

He who shall hurt the little wren  
Shall never be beloved by men;  
He who the ox to wrath has moved  
Shall never be by woman loved;  
He who shall train the horse to war  
Shall never pass the Polar Bar.

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The wanton boy that kills the fly  
Shall feel the spider's enmity ;  
He who torments the chafer's sprite  
Weaves a bower in endless night.  
The caterpillar on the leaf  
Repeats to thee thy mother's grief :  
The wild deer wandering here and there  
Keep the human soul from care :  
The lamb misused breeds public strife,  
And yet forgives the butcher's knife.  
Kill not the moth nor butterfly,  
For the last judgment draweth nigh ;  
The beggar's dog and widow's cat,  
Feed them and thou shalt grow fat.  
Every tear from every eye  
Becomes a babe in eternity ;  
The bleat, the bark, bellow, and roar,  
Are waves that beat on heaven's shore.

The bat that flits at close of eve  
Has left the brain that won't believe ;  
The owl that calls upon the night  
Speaks the unbeliever's fright.  
The gnat that sings his summer's song  
Poison gets from Slander's tongue ;  
The poison of the snake and newt  
Is the sweat of Envy's foot ;  
The poison of the honey-bee  
Is the artist's jealousy ;  
The strongest poison ever known  
Came from Cæsar's laurel-crown.  
Nought can deform the human race  
Like to the armourer's iron brace ;

The soldier armed with sword and gun  
 Palsied strikes the summer's sun.  
 When gold and gems adorn the plough,  
 To peaceful arts shall Envy bow.  
 The beggar's rags fluttering in air  
 Do to rags the heavens tear ;  
 The prince's robes and beggar's rags  
 Are toadstools on the miser's bags.  
 One mite wrung from the labourer's hands  
 Shall buy and sell the miser's lands,  
 Or, if protected from on high,  
 Shall that whole nation sell and buy ;  
 The poor man's farthing is worth more  
 Than all the gold on Afric's shore.  
 The whore and gambler, by the state  
 Licensed, build that nation's fate ;  
 The harlot's cry from street to street  
 Shall weave old England's winding-sheet ;  
 The winner's shout, the loser's curse,  
 Shall dance before dead England's hearse.

(He who mocks the infant's faith  
 Shall be mocked in age and death ;  
 He who shall teach the child to doubt  
 The rotting grave shall ne'er get out ;  
 He who respects the infant's faith  
 Triumphs over hell and death.  
 The babe is more than swaddling-bands  
 Throughout all these human lands ;  
 Tools were made, and born were hands,  
 Every farmer understands.  
 The questioner who sits so sly  
 Shall never know how to reply.

He who replies to words of doubt  
 Doth put the light of knowledge out ;  
 ✓ A puddle, or the cricket's cry,  
 Is to doubt a fit reply. /  
 The child's toys and the old man's reasons  
 Are the fruits of the two seasons.  
 The emmet's inch and eagle's mile  
 Make lame philosophy to smile.  
 A truth that's told with bad intent  
 Beats all the lies you can invent.  
 He who doubts from what he sees  
 Will ne'er believe, do what you please ;  
If the sun and moon should doubt,  
They'd immediately go out.

Every night and every morn  
 Some to misery are born ;  
 Every morn and every night  
 Some are born to sweet delight ;  
 Some are born to sweet delight,  
 Some are born to endless night.  
 Joy and woe are woven fine,  
 A clothing for the soul divine ;  
 Under every grief and pine  
 Runs a joy with silken twine.  
 It is right it should be so ;  
Man was made for joy and woe ;  
And, when this we rightly know,  
 Safely through the world we go.

✓ We are led to believe a lie  
When we see with not through the eye,  
 Which was born in a night to perish in a night  
 When the soul slept in beams of light.

God appears and God is light  
 To those poor souls who dwell in night :  
 But doth a human form display  
 To those who dwell in realms of day.

### THE MENTAL TRAVELLER.<sup>1</sup>

#### 1.



TRAVELLED through a land of men,  
 A land of men and women too ;  
 And heard and saw such dreadful  
 things

As cold earth-wanderers never knew.

<sup>1</sup> The following explanation of this remarkable poem was suggested by me in the second volume (where it was first published) of Mr. Gilchrist's book. Mr. Swinburne has proposed a somewhat different solution: but this one furnishes *some sort* of clue, and I repeat it here as better than none:—

“ The ‘ Mental Traveller ’ indicates an explorer of mental phenomena. The mental phenomenon here symbolized seems to be the career of any great Idea or intellectual movement—as, for instance, Christianity, chivalry, art, &c.—represented as going through the stages of—1, birth; 2, adversity and persecution; 3, triumph and maturity; 4, decadence through over-ripeness; 5, gradual transformation, under new conditions, into another renovated Idea, which again has to pass through all the same stages. In other words, the poem represents the action and re-action of Ideas upon society, and of society upon Ideas.

*Argument of the stanzas.* 2, The Idea, conceived with pain, is born amid enthusiasm. 3, If of masculine, enduring nature, it falls under the control and ban of the already existing state of society (the woman old). 5, As the Idea



## 2.

For there the babe is born in joy  
 That was begotten in dire woe ;  
 Just as we reap in joy the fruit  
 Which we in bitter tears did sow.

---

developes, the old society becomes moulded into a new society (the old woman grows young). 6, The Idea, now free and dominant, is united to society, as it were in wedlock. 8, It gradually grows old and effete, living now only upon the spiritual treasures laid up in the days of its early energy. 10, These still subserve many purposes of practical good, and outwardly the Idea is in its most flourishing estate, even when sapped at its roots. 11, The halo of authority and tradition, or prestige, gathering round the Idea, is symbolized in the resplendent babe born on his hearth. 13, This prestige deserts the Idea itself, and attaches to some individual, who usurps the honour due only to the Idea (as we may see in the case of papacy, royalty, &c.); and the Idea is eclipsed by its own very prestige, and assumed living representative. 14, The Idea wanders homeless till it can find a new community to mould ("until he can a maiden win"). 15 to 17, Finding whom, the Idea finds itself also living under strangely different conditions. 18, The Idea is now "beguiled to infancy"—becomes a *new* Idea, in working upon a fresh community, and under altered conditions. 20, Nor are they yet thoroughly at one; she flees away while he pursues. 22, Here we return to the first state of the case. The Idea starts upon a new course—is a babe; the society it works upon has become an old society—no longer a fair virgin, but an aged woman. 24, The Idea seems so new and unwonted that, the nearer it is seen, the more consternation it excites. 26, None can deal with the Idea so as to develop it to the full, except the old society with which it comes into contact; and this can deal with it only by misusing it at first, whereby (as in the previous stage, at the opening of the poem) it is to be again disciplined into ultimate triumph.

## 3.

And, if the babe is born a boy,  
He's given to a woman old,  
Who nails him down upon a rock,  
Catches his shrieks in cups of gold.

## 4.

She binds iron thorns around his head,  
She pierces both his hands and feet,  
She cuts his heart out at his side,  
To make it feel both cold and heat.

## 5.

Her fingers number every nerve  
Just as a miser counts his gold ;  
She lives upon his shrieks and cries,  
And she grows young as he grows old.

## 6.

Till he becomes a bleeding youth,  
And she becomes a virgin bright ;  
Then he rends up his manacles,  
And binds her down for his delight.

## 7.

He plants himself in all her nerves  
Just as a husbandman his mould,  
And she becomes his dwelling-place  
And garden fruitful seventyfold.

## 8.

An aged shadow soon he fades,  
Wandering round an earthly cot,  
Full-fillèd all with gems and gold  
Which he by industry had got.

## 9.

And these are the gems of the human soul,  
The rubies and pearls of a lovesick eye,  
The countless gold of the aching heart,  
The martyr's groan and the lover's sigh.

## 10.

They are his meat, they are his drink ;  
He feeds the beggar and the poor ;  
To the wayfaring traveller  
For ever open is his door.

## 11.

His grief is their eternal joy,  
They make the roofs and walls to ring ;  
Till from the fire upon the hearth  
A little female babe doth spring.

## 12.

And she is all of solid fire  
And gems and gold, that none his hand  
Dares stretch to touch her baby form,  
Or wrap her in his swaddling-band.

## 13.

But she comes to the man she loves,  
If young or old or rich or poor ;  
They soon drive out the aged host,  
A beggar at another's door.

## 14.

He wanders weeping far away,  
Until some other take him in ;  
Oft blind and age-bent, sore distressed,  
Until he can a maiden win.

## 15.

And, to allay his freezing age,  
The poor man takes her in his arms ;  
The cottage fades before his sight,  
The garden and its lovely charms.

## 16.

The guests are scattered through the land ;  
For the eye altering alters all ;  
The senses roll themselves in fear,  
And the flat earth becomes a ball.

## 17.

The stars, sun, moon, all shrink away,  
A desert vast without a bound,  
And nothing left to eat or drink,  
And a dark desert all around.

## 18.

The honey of her infant lips,  
The bread and wine of her sweet smile,  
The wild game of her roving eye,  
Do him to infancy beguile.

## 19.

For as he eats and drinks he grows  
Younger and younger every day,  
And on the desert wild they both  
Wander in terror and dismay.

## 20.

Like the wild stag she flees away ;  
Her fear plants many a thicket wild,  
While he pursues her night and day,  
By various arts of love beguiled ;

## 21.

By various arts of love and hate.  
Till the wild desert's planted o'er  
With labyrinths of wayward love,  
Where roam the lion, wolf, and boar.

## 22.

Till he becomes a wayward babe,  
And she a weeping woman old ;  
Then many a lover wanders here,  
The sun and stars are nearer rolled ;

## 23.

The trees bring forth sweet ecstasy  
To all who in the desert roam ;  
Till many a city there is built,  
And many a pleasant shepherd's home.

## 24.

But, when they find the frowning babe,  
Terror strikes through the region wide :  
They cry—"The babe—the babe is born !"  
And flee away on every side.

## 25.

For who dare touch the frowning form,  
His arm is withered to its root :  
Bears, lions, wolves, all howling flee,  
And every tree doth shed its fruit.

## 26.

And none can touch that frowning form  
Except it be a woman old ;  
She nails him down upon the rock,  
And all is done as I have told.

## WILLIAM BINE.



WILLIAM wondered for girls are mad,  
 And I wonder whether they mean  
 to kill.

And I wonder if William Bine will die,  
 For certainly he is very ill.

He went to church on a May morning,  
 attended to service and sung and chanted;  
 but the angels of Providence drove them away,  
 and he returned home in misery.

He went out out to the field and field,  
 He went out out to the village and town,  
 but he came home in a black black cloud,  
 and sank in his bed, and there lay down.

And in mood of Providence at his feet,  
 and in mood of Providence at his head,  
 and in the night a black black cloud,  
 and in the night the sick man on his bed.

And in his right hand was Mary Green,  
 And on his left hand was his sister Jane,  
 And their tears fell through the black black cloud  
 To drive away the sick man's pain.

"Oh William, if thou dost another love,  
 Dost another love better than poor Mary,  
 Go and take that other to be thy wife,  
 And Mary Green shall her servant be."

“ Yes, Mary, I do another love,  
Another I love far better than thee,  
And another I will have for my wife :  
Then what have I to do with thee ?

“ For thou art melancholy pale,  
And on thy head is the cold moon’s shine,  
But she is ruddy and bright as day,  
And the sunbeams dazzle from her eyne.”

Mary trembled, and Mary chilled,  
And Mary fell down on the right-hand floor,  
That William Bond and his sister Jane  
Scarce could recover Mary more.

When Mary woke and found her laid  
On the right hand of her William dear,  
On the right hand of his loved bed,  
And saw her William Bond so near ;

The fairies that fled from William Bond  
Danced around her shining head ;  
They danced over the pillow white,  
And the angels of Providence left the bed.

“ I thought Love lived in the hot sunshine,  
But oh he lives in the moony light !  
I thought to find Love in the heat of day,  
But sweet Love is the comforter of night.

“ Seek Love in the pity of others’ woe,  
In the gentle relief of another’s care,  
In the darkness of night and the winter’s snow,  
With the naked and outcast,—seek Love there.”



## COUPLETS AND FRAGMENTS.

### I.



WALKED abroad on a snowy day,  
I asked the soft Snow with me to play ;  
She played and she melted in all her  
prime ;  
And the Winter called it a dreadful crime.

### II.



ABSTINENCE sows sand all over  
The ruddy limbs and flaming hair ;  
But desire gratified  
Plants fruits of life and beauty there.


### III.




THE look of love alarms,  
Because 'tis filled with fire,  
But the look of soft deceit  
Shall win the lover's hire :  
Soft deceit and idleness,  
These are beauty's sweetest dress.




IV.

 O Chloe's breast young Cupid slyly stole,  
But he crept in at Myra's pocket-hole.


V.

 ROWN old in love from seven till seven  
times seven,  
I oft have wished for hell, for ease from  
heaven.


VI.

 HE Sword sang on the barren heath,  
The Sickle in the fruitful field:  
The Sword he sang a song of death,  
But could not make the Sickle yield.

VII.

 GREAT things are done when men and  
mountains meet;  
These are not done by jostling in the  
street.

VIII.

 HE errors of a wise man make your rule,  
Rather than the perfections of a fool.

## IX.

**S**OME people admire the work of a fool,  
 For it's sure to keep your judgment cool:  
 It does not reproach you with want of wit;  
 It is not like a lawyer serving a writ.

## X.

**T**HIS is a blockhead who wants a proof of what  
 he can't perceive,  
 And he's a fool who tries to make such a  
 blockhead believe.

## XI.

**I**F e'er I grow to man's estate,  
 Oh give to me a woman's fate!  
 May I govern all, both great and small,  
 Have the last word, and take the wall!

## XII.

**H**IS whole life is an epigram—smack,  
 smooth, and nobly penned,  
 Plaited quite neat to catch applause, with  
 a strong noose at the end.

XIII.

AN ANSWER TO THE PARSON.

“**W**HY of the sheep do you not learn peace?”  
 “ Because I don’t want you to shear my  
 fleece.”

XIV.

**T**HE Angel that presided o’er my birth  
 Said: “ Little creature, formed of joy and  
 mirth,  
 Go, live without the help of anything on earth.”

XV.


REASON.

**Y**OU don’t believe I would attempt to make  
 you:  
 You are asleep,—I won’t attempt to wake  
 you.


Sleep on, sleep on; while in your pleasant dreams  
 Of Reason, you may drink of Life’s clear streams.  
 Reason and Newton, they are quite two things;  
 For so the swallow and the sparrow sings.  
 Reason says “ Miracle:” Newton says “ Doubt:”  
 Ay, that’s the way to make all Nature out!  
 Doubt, doubt, and don’t believe without experiment.  
 That is the very thing that Jesus meant,  
 When he said, “ Only believe,—believe, and try:”  
 Try, try, and never mind the reason why.

## XVI.


## FRIENDS AND FOES.

Y a friend's errors anger show,  
 Mirth at the errors of a foe.  
 Anger and wrath my bosom rends :  
 I thought them the errors of friends.  
 But all my limbs with warmth glow :  
 I find them the errors of the foe.

## XVII.


ERE lies John Trot, the friend of all man-  
 kind ;  
 He has not left one enemy behind.  
 Friends were quite hard to find, old authors say ;  
 But now they stand in everybody's way.

## XVIII.

AS buried near this dyke,  
 That my friends may weep as much as they  
 like.

## XIX.

## BLAKE'S FRIENDS.


OR this is being a friend just in the nick,—  
 Not when he's well, but waiting till he's  
 sick.

He calls you to his help: be you not moved,  
 Until by being sick his wants are proved.

You see him spend his soul in prophecy :  
 Do you believe it a confounded lie,  
 Till some bookseller and the public fame  
 Prove there is truth in his extravagant claim.

For 'tis atrocious in a friend you love  
 To tell you anything that he can't prove :  
 And 'tis most wicked, in a Christian nation,  
 For any one to pretend to inspiration.


XX.

 FALSE friends, fie, fie! our friendship you  
 shan't sever :  
 In spite, we will be greater friends than  
 ever.


XXI.

ON HAYLEY.


1.

 O forgive enemies Hayley does pretend,  
 Who never in his life forgave a friend.


2.

 WHY friendship oft has made my heart to  
 ache :—  
 Do be my enemy, for friendship's sake.

## 3.


Y title as a genius thus is proved :  
Not praised by Hayley, nor by Flaxman  
Loved.

## 4.


AYLEY'S birth this was the happy lot :  
His mother on his father him begot.

## XXII.

## CROMEK.

PETTY sneaking knave I knew . . .  
Oh, Mr. Cromek, how do ye do ?

## XXIII.

RAYERS plough not, praises reap not,  
Joys laugh not, sorrows weep not.

EPIGRAMS AND SATIRICAL PIECES  
ON ART AND ARTISTS.


## I.

## ORATOR PRIG.




ASKED of my dear friend orator Prig :  
 "What's the first part of oratory?" He  
 said: "A great wig."  
 "And what is the second?" Then,  
 dancing a jig  
 And bowing profoundly, he said: "A great wig."  
 "And what is the third?" Then he snored like a  
 pig,  
 And, puffing his cheeks out, replied: "A great wig."  
 So, if to a painter the question you push,  
 "What's the first part of painting?" he'll say: "A  
 paint-brush."  
 "And what is the second?" With most modest  
 blush,  
 He'll smile like a cherub, and say: "A paint-brush."  
 "And what is the third?" He'll bow like a rush,  
 With a leer in his eye, and reply: "A paint-brush."  
 Perhaps this is all a painter can want:  
 But look yonder,—that house is the house of  
 Rembrandt.

## II



 DEAF mother Outline, of wisdom most  
 What's the first part of painting?" She  
 said: - "Patronage."  
 "And what is the second to please and engage?"  
 She answer'd like a fury, and said: - "Patronage."  
 "And what is the third?" She put off old age,  
 She answer'd like a seraph, and said: - "Patronage."

## III


 I'd look to see the sweet outlines  
 And beautiful forms that Love does wear;  
 I'd look to find sun patches, paint,  
 Jewels and scents and powdered hair.


## IV

## TO THE VENERABLE PAINTER.


 To make the home of war, we all agree;  
 To make the world of peace, all who can  
 See.

## V

## TO VENERABLE ARTISTS.


 That God's resembling Newton does show;  
 And the Devil is a black outline, all of us  
 know.




Perhaps this little fable may make us merry.  
 A dog went over the water without a wherry.  
 A bone which he had stolen he had in his mouth :  
 He cared not whether the wind was north or  
 south.

As he swam, he saw the reflection of the bone :  
 "This is quite perfection, one generalizing tone!—  
 Outline? There's no outline, there's no such thing:  
 All is chiaroscuro, poco-pen,—it's all colouring!"—  
 Snap, snap! He has lost shadow, and substance  
 too!


He had them both before.—"Now how do ye do?"  
 "A great deal better than I was before :  
 Those who taste colouring love it more and more."

## VI.

## COLOUR AND FORM.

 ALL that the public voice which is their  
 error?  
 Like as a monkey, peeping in a mirror,  
 Admires all his colours brown and warm,  
 And never once perceives his ugly form.

## VII.

 HANK God, I never was sent to school,  
 To be flogged into following the style of  
 a fool!

## VIII.

## ON CERTAIN FRIENDS.



**F**OUND them blind, I taught them how  
to see,  
And now they know neither themselves  
nor me.

## IX.

**ON THE GREAT ENCOURAGEMENT GIVEN BY ENGLISH NOBILITY AND GENTRY TO CORREGGIO, RUBENS, REMBRANDT, REYNOLDS, GAINSBOROUGH, CATALANI, AND DILBERRY DOODLE.**



**F**IVE pensions to the learned pig,  
Or the hare playing on a tabor;  
Anglus can never see perfection  
But in the journeyman's labour.

As the ignorant savage will sell his own wife  
For a button, a bauble, a bead, or a knife,—  
So the taught savage Englishman spends his whole  
fortune

On a smear or a squall to destroy picture or tune:  
And I call upon Colonel Wardle  
To give these rascals a dose of caudle.

All pictures that's painted with sense or with  
thought


Are painted by madmen, as sure as a groat;  
For the greater the fool, in the Art the more blest,

And when they are drunk they always paint best.  
 They never can Raphael it, Fuseli it, nor Blake it :  
 If they can't see an outline, pray how can they  
 make it ?

All men have drawn outlines whenever they saw  
 them ;

Madmen see outlines, and therefore they draw them.


## X.

EEING a Rembrandt or Correggio,  
 Of crippled Harry I think and slobbering  
 Joe ;

And then I question thus : Are artists' rules  
 To be drawn from the works of two manifest fools ?  
 Then God defend us from the Arts, I say ;  
 For battle, murder, sudden death, let's pray.  
 Rather than be such a blind human fool,  
 I'd be an ass, a hog, a worm, a chair, a stool.

## XI.

## TO ENGLISH CONNOISSEURS.

OU must agree that Rubens was a fool,  
 And yet you make him master of your  
 school,

And give more money for his slobberings  
 Than you will give for Raphael's finest things.  
 I understood Christ was a carpenter,  
 And not a brewer's servant, my good sir.

## XII.

## RAPHAEL AND RUBENS.

**N**ATURE and art in this together suit—  
 What is most grand is always most  
 minute:—

Rubens think tables, chairs, and stools, are grand;  
 But Raphael thinks a head, a foot, a hand.  
 Raphael, sublime, majestic, graceful, wise,  
 His executive power must I despise!  
 Rubens, low, vulgar, stupid, ignorant,  
 His power of execution I must grant,—  
 Learn the laborious stumble of a fool,  
 And from an idiot's actions form my rule!  
 Go send your children to the slobbering-school!

## XIII.

**S**IR Joshua praises Michael Angelo:  
 'Tis Christian meekness thus to praise a  
 foe:—

But 'twould be madness, all the world would say,  
 Should Michael Angelo praise Sir Joshua.  
 Christ used the Pharisees in a rougher way.

## XIV.


## COLOUR.

**N**O real style of colouring ever appears,  
 But advertizing in the newspapers.  
 Look there—you'll see Sir Joshua's  
 colouring:

Look at his pictures—all has taken wing.


## XV.

## FUSELL.

 HE only man that ever I knew  
 Who did not make me almost spue  
 Was Fuseli : he was both Turk and Jew.  
 And so, dear Christian friends, how do you do ?


## XVI.

## TO FLAXMAN.

 OU call me mad ; 'tis folly to do so,—  
 To seek to turn a madman to a foe.  
 If you think as you speak, you are an ass ;  
 If you do not, you are but what you was.


## XVII.

## TO THE SAME.

 MOCK thee not, though I by thee am  
 mockèd ;  
 Thou call'st me madman, but I call thee  
 blockhead.

## XVIII.

## ON STOTHARD.

 OU say reserve and modesty *he* has,  
 Whose heart is iron, his head wood, and  
 his face brass.  
 The fox, the owl, the spider, and the bat,  
 By sweet reserve and modesty grow fat.

## XIX.

**W**HEN nations grow old  
The Arts grow cold,  
And Commerce settles on every tree;  
And the poor and the old  
Can live upon gold,  
For all are born poor.

*Aged sixty-three.*





## TIRIEL.

### I

**A**ND aged Tiriël stood before the gates  
of his beautiful palace,  
With Myratana, once the Queen of all  
the western plains ;  
now his eyes were darkened, and his wife  
fading in death,  
y stood before their once delightful palace ; and  
thus the voice  
aged Tiriël arose, that his sons might hear in  
their gates.

accursed race of Tiriël ! behold your father ;  
e forth and look on her that bore you. Come,  
you accursed sons.  
ny weak arms I here have borne your dying  
mother ;  
e forth, sons of the curse, come forth ! see the  
death of Myratana."

sons ran from their gates, and saw their aged  
parents stand :  
thus the eldest son of Tiriël raised his mighty  
voice :—

" Old man ! unworthy to be called the father of  
 Time's race !  
 For every one of those thy wrinkles, each of  
 those grey hairs,  
 Are cruel as death, and as obdurate as the devour-  
 ing pit !  
 Why should thy sons care for thy curses, thou  
 accursed man ?  
 Were we not slaves till we rebelled ? Who cares  
 for Time's curse ?  
 His blessing was a cruel curse : his curse may be  
 a blessing."

He ceased. The aged man raised up his right  
 hand to the heavens :  
 His left supported Myrtana, shrinking in pangs  
 of death.  
 The orbs of his large eyes he opened, and thus his  
 voice went forth :—

" Serpents, not sons, wreathing around the bones  
 of Time !  
 Ye worms of death, feasting upon your aged  
 parents' flesh,  
 Listen, and hear your mother's groans. No more  
 accursed sons  
 She bears : she groans not at the birth of Heuxos  
 or Yuva.  
 These are the groans of death, ye serpents ! these  
 are the groans of death !  
 Nourished with milk, ye serpents, nourished with  
 mother's tears and cares !



Look at my eyes, blind as the orbless skull among  
the stones ;  
Look at my bald head. Hark, listen, ye serpents,  
listen ! . . . .  
What, Myratana ! What, my wife ! O soul ! O spirit !  
O fire !  
What, Myratana, art thou dead ? Look here, ye  
serpents, look !  
The serpents sprung from her own bowels have  
drained her dry as this.  
Curse on your ruthless heads, for I will bury her  
even here !”

So saying, he began to dig a grave with his aged  
hands :

But Heuxos called a son of Zazel to dig their  
mother a grave.

“ Old cruelty, desist, and let us dig a grave for thee.  
Thou hast refused our charity, thou hast refused  
our food,  
Thou hast refused our clothes, our beds, our houses  
for thy dwelling,  
Choosing to wander like a son of Zazel in the rocks.  
Why dost thou curse ? Is not the curse now come  
upon thine head ?  
Was it not thou enslaved the sons of Zazel ? and  
they have cursed,  
And now thou feel'st it ! Dig a grave, and let us  
bury our mother.”

“ There, take the body, cursed sons ! and may the  
heavens rain wrath,

As thick as northern fogs, around your gates, to  
choke you up!  
That you may lie as now your mother lies—like  
dogs, cast out,  
The stink of your dead carcasses annoying man and  
beast,  
Till your white bones are bleached with age for a  
memorial.  
No! your remembrance shall perish; for, when your  
carcasses  
Lie stinking on the earth, the buriers shall arise  
from the East,  
And not a bone of all the sons of Tiriel remain.  
Bury your mother, but you cannot bury the curse  
of Tiriel."

He ceased, and darkling o'er the mountains sought  
his pathless way.

## II.

**H**E wandered day and night. To him both  
day and night were dark:  
The sun he felt, but the bright moon was  
now a useless globe.  
O'er mountains and through vales of woe the blind  
and aged man  
Wandered, till he that leadeth all led him to the  
vales of Har.

And Har and Heva, like two children, sat beneath  
the oak.

Mnetha, now aged, waited on them, and brought them food and clothing.  
But they were as the shadow of Har, and as the years forgotten ;  
Playing with flowers and running after birds they spent the day,  
And in the night like infants slept, delighted with infant dreams.

Soon as the blind wanderer entered the pleasant gardens of Har,  
They ran weeping, like frightened infants, for refuge in Mnetha's arms.  
The blind man felt his way, and cried: " Peace to these open doors !  
Let no one fear, for poor blind Tiriël hurts none but himself.  
Tell me, O friends, where am I now, and in what pleasant place ?"

" This is the valley of Har," said Mnetha, " and this the tent of Har.  
Who art thou, poor blind man, that takest the name of Tiriël on thee?  
Tiriël is King of all the West. Who art thou?  
I am Mnetha ;  
And this is Har and Heva, trembling like infants by my side."

" I know Tiriël is King of the West, and there he lives in joy.  
No matter who I am, O Mnetha ! If thou hast any food,

Give it me, for I cannot stay,—my journey is far  
from hence."

Then Har said: "O my mother Mnetha, venture  
not so near him,  
For he is the king of rotten wood, and of the  
bones of death;  
He wanders without eyes, and passes through  
thick walls and doors.  
Thou shalt not smite my mother Mnetha, O thou  
eyeless man!"

'A wanderer, I beg for food. You see I cannot  
weep.  
I cast away my staff, the kind companion of my  
travel,  
And I kneel down that you may see I am a  
harmless man."

He kneeled down. And Mnetha said: "Come,  
Har and Heva, rise:  
He is an innocent old man, and hungry with his  
travel."

Then Har arose, and laid his hand upon old Tiriël's  
head.

"God bless thy poor bald pate, God bless thy  
hollow winking eyes,  
God bless thy shrivelled beard, God bless thy  
many-wrinkled forehead!  
Thou hast no teeth, old man! and thus I kiss thy  
sleek bald head.

Heva, come kiss his bald head, for he will not hurt us, Heva."

Then Heva came, and took old Tiriël in her mother's arms.

"Bless thy poor eyes, old man, and bless the old father of Tiriël!

Thou art my Tiriël's old father; I know thee through thy wrinkles,

Because thou smellest like the fig-tree, thou smellest like ripe figs.

How didst thou lose thy eyes, old Tiriël? Bless thy wrinkled face!"

Mnetha said: "Come in, aged wanderer; tell us of thy name.

Why shouldst thou conceal thyself from those of thine own flesh?"

"I am not of this region," said Tiriël dissemblingly.

"I am an aged wanderer, once father of a race Far in the North; but they were wicked, and were all destroyed,

And I their father sent an outcast. I have told you all:

Ask me no more, I pray, for grief hath sealed my precious sight."

"O Lord!" said Mnetha, "how I tremble! Are there then more people,

More human creatures on this earth, beside the  
sons of Har?"

"No more," said Tiriël, "but I, remain on all this  
globe;  
And I remain an outcast. Hast thou anything  
to drink?"

Then Mnetha gave him milk and fruits, and they  
sat down together.

## III.



THEY sat and ate, and Har and Heva  
smiled on Tiriël.

"Thou art a very old old man, but I am older  
than thou.

How came thine hair to leave thy forehead, how  
came thy face so brown?

My hair is very long, my beard doth cover all my  
breast.

God bless thy piteous face! To count the wrinkles  
in thy face

Would puzzle Mnetha. Bless thy face, for thou  
art Tiriël!"

"Tiriël I never saw but once. I sat with him  
and ate;

He was as cheerful as a prince, and gave me  
entertainment.

But long I stayed not at his palace, for I am  
forced to wander."

"What! wilt thou leave us too?" said Heva  
"Thou shalt not leave us too,  
For we have many sports to show thee, and many  
songs to sing;  
And after dinner we will walk into the cage of Har,  
And thou shalt help us to catch birds, and gather  
them ripe cherries;  
Then let thy name be Tiriël, and never leave us  
more."

"If thou dost go," said Har, "I wish thine eyes  
may see thy folly.  
My sons have left me.—Did thine leave thee?  
Oh 'twas very cruel!"

"No, venerable man," said Tiriël, "ask me not  
such things,  
For thou dost make my heart to bleed. My sons  
were not like thine,  
But worse. Oh never ask me more, or I must  
flee away."

"Thou shalt not go," said Heva, "till thou hast  
seen our singing-birds,  
And heard Har sing in the great cage, and slept  
upon our fleeces.  
Go not, for thou art so like Tiriël that I love  
thine head,  
Though it is wrinkled like the earth parched with  
the summer heat."

Then Tiriël rose up from the seat, and said: "God  
bless these tents!  
My journey is o'er rocks and mountains, not in  
pleasant vales;  
I must not sleep nor rest, because of madness and  
dismay."

And Mnetha said: "Thou must not go to wander  
dark alone,  
But dwell with us, and let us be to thee instead  
of eyes,  
And I will bring thee food, old man, till death  
shall call thee hence."


Then Tiriël frowned, and answered: "Did I not  
command you, saying,  
Madness and deep dismay possess the heart of the  
blind man,  
The wanderer who seeks the woods, leaning upon  
his staff?"

Then Mnetha, trembling at his frowns, led him to  
the tent-door,  
And gave to him his staff, and blessed him. He  
went on his way.

But Har and Heva stood and watched him till he  
entered the wood;  
And then they went and wept to Mnetha, but they  
soon forgot their tears,



## IV.

VER the weary hills the blind man took  
his lonely way ;  
To him the day and night alike was dark  
and desolate.

far he had not gone when Ijim from his  
woods came down,  
him at entrance of the forest, in a dark and  
lonely way.

ho art thou, eyeless wretch, that thus ob-  
structest the lion's path ?  
I shall rend thy feeble joints, thou tempter of  
dark Ijim !  
thou hast the form of Tiriël, but I know thee  
well enough !  
and from my path, foul fiend ! Is this the last of  
thy deceits—  
be a hypocrite, and stand in shape of a blind  
beggar ?”

blind man heard his brother's voice, and  
kneeled down on his knee.

brother Ijim, if it is thy voice that speaks to  
me,—  
do not thy brother Tiriël, though weary of his  
life.  
sons have smitten me already; and, if thou  
smitest me,  
curse that rolls over their heads will rest  
itself on thine.

"Tis now seven years since in my palace I beheld  
thy face."

"Come, thou dark fiend, I dare thy cunning! know  
that Ijim scorns  
To smite thee in the form of helpless age and  
eyeless policy;  
Rise up, for I discern thee, and I dare thy eloquent  
tongue.  
Come, I will lead thee on thy way, and use thee  
as a scoff."

"O brother Ijim, thou beholdest wretched Tiriël:  
Kiss me, my brother, and then leave me to wander  
desolate!"

"No, artful fiend, but I will lead thee; dost thou  
want to go?  
Reply not, lest I bind thee with the green flags of  
the brook;  
Ay, now thou art discovered. I will use thee like  
a slave."

When Tiriël heard the words of Ijim, he sought  
not to reply:  
He knew 'twas vain, for Ijim's words were as the  
voice of Fate.

And they went on together, over hills, through  
woody dales,  
Blind to the pleasures of the sight, and deaf to  
warbling birds.

All day they walked, and all the night beneath the  
pleasant moon,  
Westwardly journeying, till Tiriël grew weary with  
his travel.

“O Ijim, I am faint and weary, for my knees  
forbid  
To bear me further. Urge me not, lest I should  
die with travel.  
A little rest I crave, a little water from a brook,  
Or I shall soon discover that I am a mortal man,  
And thou wilt lose thy once-loved Tiriël. Alas!  
how faint I am !”

“Impudent fiend !” said Ijim, “hold thy glib and  
eloquent tongue ;—  
Tiriël is a king, and thou the tempter of dark  
Ijim.  
Drink of this running brook, and I will bear thee  
on my shoulders.”

He drank ; and Ijim raised him up, and bore him  
on his shoulders.  
All day he bore him ; and, when evening drew  
her solemn curtain,  
Entered the gates of Tiriël’s palace, and stood and  
called aloud.

“Heuxos, come forth ! I here have brought the  
fiend that troubles Ijim.  
Look ! know’st thou aught of this grey beard, or  
of these blinded eyes ?”

Heuxos and Lotho ran forth at the sound of  
Ijim's voice,  
And saw their aged father borne upon his mighty  
shoulders.  
Their eloquent tongues were dumb, and sweat  
stood on their trembling limbs ;  
They knew 'twas vain to strive with Ijim. They  
bowed and silent stood.

“ What, Heuxos ! call thy father, for I mean to  
sport to-night.  
This is the hypocrite that sometimes roars a  
dreadful lion ;  
Then I have rent his limbs, and left him rotting  
in the forest  
For birds to eat. But I have scarce departed from  
the place  
But like a tiger he would come, and so I rent him  
too.  
Then like a river he would seek to drown me in  
his waves,  
But soon I buffeted the torrent ; anon like to a  
cloud  
Fraught with the swords of lightning, but I braved  
the vengeance too.  
Then he would creep like a bright serpent, till  
around my neck  
While I was sleeping he would twine : I squeezed  
his poisonous soul.  
Then like a toad or like a newt would whisper in  
my ears ;  
Or like a rock stood in my way, or like a poisonous  
shrub.

---

At last I caught him in the form of Tiriël blind  
and old,  
And so I'll keep him. Fetch your father, fetch  
forth Myratana."

They stood confounded, and thus Tiriël raised his  
silver voice.

"Serpents, not sons, why do you stand? Fetch  
hither Tiriël,  
Fetch hither Myratana, and delight yourselves  
with scoffs;  
For poor blind Tiriël is returned, and this much-  
injured head  
Is ready for your bitter taunts. Come forth, sons  
of the curse!"

Meantime the other sons of Tiriël ran around  
their father,  
Confounded at the terrible strength of Ijim. They  
knew 'twas vain,  
Both spear and shield were useless, and the coat  
of iron mail,  
When Ijim stretched his mighty arm; the arrow  
from his limbs  
Rebounded, and the piercing sword broke on his  
naked flesh.

"Then is it true, Heuxos, that thou hast turned  
thy aged parent  
To be the sport of wintry winds," said Ijim: "is  
this true?  
It is a lie, and I am like the tree torn by the wind,

Thou eyeless fiend and you dissemblers! Is this  
 Tiriél's house?  
 It is as false as Matha, and as dark as vacant  
 Orcus.  
 Escape, ye fiends, for Ijim will not lift his hand  
 against ye."

So saying, Ijim gloomy turned his back, and  
 silent sought  
 The secret forests, and all night wandered in  
 desolate ways.

## v.

**A**ND aged Tiriél stood and said: "Where  
 does the thunder sleep?  
 Where doth he hide his terrible head?  
 and his swift and fiery daughters,  
 Where do they shroud their fiery wings, and the  
 terrors of their hair?  
 Earth, thus I stamp thy bosom! rouse the earth-  
 quake from his den,  
 To raise his dark and burning visage through the  
 cleaving ground,  
 To thrust these towers with his shoulders! Let  
 his fiery dogs  
 rise from the centre, belching flames and roaring  
 dark smoke!  
 Where art thou, Pestilence, that bathest in fogs  
 and standing lakes?  
 Raise up thy sluggish limbs, and let the loath-  
 somest of poisons

Drop from thy garments as thou walkest, wrapped  
in yellow clouds!  
Here take thy seat in this wide court; let it be  
strewn with dead;  
And sit and smile upon these cursed sons of Tiriël!  
Thunder, and fire, and pestilence, hear you not  
Tiriël's curse?"

He ceased. The heavy clouds confused rolled  
round the lofty towers,  
Discharging their enormous voices at the father's  
curse.  
The earth trembled, fires belched from the yawning  
clefts,  
And, when the shaking ceased, a fog possessed  
the accursed clime.

The cry was great in Tiriël's palace. His five  
daughters ran,  
And caught him by the garments, weeping with  
cries of bitter woe.

"Ay, now you feel the curse, you cry! but may  
all ears be deaf  
As Tiriël's, and all eyes as blind as Tiriël's, to your  
woes!  
May never stars shine on your roofs, may never  
sun nor moon  
Visit you, but eternal fogs hover around your  
walls!—  
Hela, my youngest daughter, thou shalt lead me  
from this place;

And let the curse fall on the rest, and wrap them  
up together !”

He ceased, and Hela led her father from the  
noisome place.

In haste they fled, while all the sons and daughters  
of Tiriël,

Chained in thick darkness, uttered cries of mourn-  
ing all the night.

And in the morning, lo ! an hundred men in  
ghastly death,

The four daughters, stretched on the marble pave-  
ment, silent, all

Fallen by the pestilence,—the rest moped round in  
guilty fears ;

And all the children in their beds were cut off in  
one night.

Thirty of Tiriël's sons remained, to wither in the  
palace—

Desolate, loathed, dumb, astonished—waiting for  
black death.

## VI.



AND Hela led her father through the silence  
of the night,  
Astonished, silent, till the morning beams  
began to spring.

“ Now, Hela, I can go with pleasure, and dwell with  
Har and Heva,

Now that the curse shall clean devour all those  
guilty sons.



This is the right and ready way; I know it by the  
sound

That our feet make. Remember, Hela, I have  
saved thee from death;

Then be obedient to thy father, for the curse is  
taken off thee.

I dwelt with Myratana five years in the desolate  
rock;

And all that time we waited for the fire to fall  
from heaven,

Or for the torrents of the sea to overwhelm you  
all.

But now my wife is dead, and all the time of grace  
is past.

You see the parents' curse. Now lead me where I  
have commanded."

"O leagued with evil spirits, thou accursed man of  
sin,—

True, I was born thy slave. Who asked thee to  
save me from death?

'Twas for thyself, thou cruel man, because thou  
wantest eyes."

"True, Hela, this is the desert of all those cruel  
ones.

Is Tiriél cruel? Look! his daughter—and his  
youngest daughter—

Laughs at affection, glories in rebellion, scoffs at  
love.

I have not ate these two days; lead me to Har  
and Heva's tent,

Or I will wrap thee up in such a terrible father's  
 curse  
 That thou shalt feel worms in thy marrow creeping  
 through thy bones ;  
 Yet thou shalt lead me. Lead me, I command, to  
 Har and Heva."

"O cruel ! O destroyer ! O consumer ! O avenger!  
 To Har and Heva I will lead thee ; then would  
 that they would curse,—  
 Then would they curse as thou hast cursed ! But  
 they are not like thee !  
 Oh they are holy and forgiving, filled with loving  
 mercy,  
 Forgetting the offences of their most rebellious  
 children,  
 Or else thou wouldest not have lived to curse thy  
 helpless children."

"Look on my eyes, Hela, and see (for thou hast  
 eyes to see)  
 The tears swell from my stony fountains ; where-  
 fore do I weep ?  
 Wherefore from my blind orbs art thou not seized  
 with poisonous stings ?  
 Laugh, serpent, youngest venomous reptile of the  
 flesh of Tiriel !  
 Laugh, for thy father Tiriel shall give thee cause  
 to laugh,  
 Unless thou lead me to the tent of Har, child of  
 the curse !"

"Silence thy evil tongue, thou murderer of thy  
 helpless children.

I lead thee to the tent of Har: not that I mind  
thy curse,  
But that I feel they will curse thee, and hang  
upon thy bones  
Fell shaking agonies, and in each wrinkle of that  
face  
Plant worms of death to feast upon the tongue of  
terrible curses!"

"Hela, my daughter, listen! Thou art the daughter  
of Tiriël.  
Thy father calls. Thy father lifts his hand unto  
the heavens,  
For thou hast laughed at my tears, and cursed thy  
aged father:  
Let snakes rise from thy bedded locks, and laugh  
among thy curls!"

He ceased. Her dark hair upright stood, while  
snakes infolded round  
Her madding brows: her shrieks appalled the  
soul of Tiriël.

"What have I done, Hela, my daughter? Fear'st  
thou now the curse,  
Or wherefore dost thou cry? Ah wretch, to  
curse thy aged father!  
Lead me to Har and Heva, and the curse of Tiriël  
Shall fail. If thou refuse, howl in the desolate  
mountains."

## VII.

**S**HE, howling, led him over mountains and  
 through frightened vales,  
 Till to the caves of Zazel they approached  
 at eventide.

Forth from their caves old Zazel and his sons ran,  
 when they saw  
 Their tyrant prince blind, and his daughter howling  
 and leading him.

They laughed and mocked; some threw dirt and  
 stones as they passed by.  
 But, when Tiriël turned around and raised his  
 awful voice,  
 Some fled away; but Zazel stood still, and thus  
 began:—


“Bald tyrant, wrinkled cunning, listen to Zazel’s  
 chains;  
 ’Twas thou that chained thy brother Zazel!  
 Where are now thine eyes?  
 Shout, beautiful daughter of Tiriël; thou singest a  
 sweet song!  
 Where are you going? Come and eat some roots,  
 and drink some water.  
 Thy crown is bald, old man; the sun will dry thy  
 brains away,  
 And thou wilt be as foolish as thy foolish brother  
 Zazel.”

The blind man heard, and smote his breast, and  
 trembling passed on.

They threw dirt after them, till to the covert of a  
wood  
The howling maiden led her father, where wild  
beasts resort,  
Hoping to end her woes; but from her cries the  
tigers fled.  
All night they wandered through the wood; and,  
when the sun arose,  
They entered on the mountains of Har. At noon  
the happy tents  
Were frightened by the dismal cries of Hela on the  
mountains.

But Har and Heva slept fearless as babes on  
loving breasts.  
Mnetha awoke; she ran and stood at the tent-  
door, and saw  
The aged wanderer led towards the tents. She  
took her bow,  
And chose her arrows, then advanced to meet the  
terrible pair.

## VIII.

ND Mnetha hasted, and met them at the  
gate of the lower garden.

“Stand still, or from my bow receive a sharp and  
winged death!”

Then Tiriël stood, saying: “What soft voice  
threatens such bitter things?”

Lead me to Har and Heva: I am Tiriël, King of  
the West."

And Mnetha led them to the tent of Har; and  
Har and Heva  
Ran to the door. When Tiriël felt the ankles of  
aged Har,  
He said: "O weak mistaken father of a lawless  
race,  
Thy laws, O Har, and Tiriël's wisdom, end together  
in a curse.  
Why is one law given to the lion and the patient ox,  
And why men bound beneath the heavens in a  
reptile form,  
A worm of sixty winters creeping on the dusty  
ground? •  
The child springs from the womb; the father  
ready stands to form  
The infant head, while the mother idle plays with  
her dog on her couch.  
The young bosom is cold for lack of mother's  
nourishment, and milk  
Is cut off from the weeping mouth with difficulty  
and pain.  
The little lids are lifted, and the little nostrils  
opened;  
The father forms a whip to rouse the sluggish  
senses to act,  
And scourges off all youthful fancies from the  
new-born man.  
Then walks the weak infant in sorrow, compelled  
to number footsteps

Upon the sand. And, when the drone has reached  
his crawling length,  
Black berries appear that poison all around him.  
Such was Tiriël,—  
Compelled to pray repugnant and to humble the  
immortal spirit,  
Till I am subtle as a serpent in a paradise,  
Consuming all—both flowers and fruits, insects and  
warbling birds.  
And now my paradise is fallen, and a drear sandy  
plain  
Returns my thirsty hissings in a curse on thee, O  
Har,  
Mistaken father of a lawless race!—My voice is  
past.”

He ceased, outstretched at Har and Heva's feet  
in awful death.

THE END.



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