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THE ART OF WILLIAM BLAKE



By courtesy of Nelson Museum of Fine Arts

The Whirlwind
Ezekiel's Vision of the Cherubim and eyed wheels.

ACT OF

THE

EX-TERRA BOOK

WATER BOOKS

1888

NEW YORK

1887



THE ART OF WILLIAM BLAKE

HIS SKETCH-BOOK
HIS WATER-COLOURS
HIS PAINTED BOOKS

BY
ELISABETH LUTHER CARY

*WITH NUMEROUS
ILLUSTRATIONS*

NEW YORK
MOFFAT, YARD & COMPANY
1907

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A. M. J.

NOTE

THE preparation of any work on Blake involves much study of materials accessible only through the kindness of private owners. I owe to Mr. W. A. White of Brooklyn, New York, the privilege of freely examining his collection of Blake's works, from which the principal reproductions in the present volume have been made. Without this assistance I should not have been able to get beyond a first superficial impression of Blake's characteristics as an artist, and in his case it is more than usually true that first impressions are misleading.

I have to acknowledge the courtesy of the authorities of the Boston Museum in furnishing me with photographs of the water-colours by Blake in their possession, and I owe to the authorities of the Metropolitan Museum a similar favour.

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THE ART OF WILLIAM BLAKE

A PROPER form for a memorial to Blake's genius would be, no doubt, the reproduction by the most appropriate processes of all extant designs by him whether in the shape of sketches or fully developed drawings and paintings. In this way only could be brought together for consultation by the student of his work data now scattered over England and America, in the possession of museums and private owners, or occasionally in the market with an ever rising price attached to even the most meagre and least characteristic examples.

Such a task naturally would belong to one of the societies to whose intelligently dedicated efforts we owe the preservation and accessibility in reproductions of the great etchers and engravers of the past; and there is little doubt that in the course of time it will be undertaken. Meanwhile, many of Blake's engravings and printed books have been reproduced in whole or in part and with varying degrees of success, and these fragmentary attempts to fix the shadow of his accomplishment, unworthy of its substance as the result often may seem to his admirers, are useful in preparing the way for the final collection, and in familiarizing the public with his methods of design, his style in pictorial description, the drama of his themes, the mingled Romantic and Classic strains

by which he awakens in the mind the often dissociated emotions of awe and joy. No one ever has better understood the imaginative effects of architecture in decorative design and of majestic proportions; no one has more completely realized the gentle charm of rural scenes in contrast with these, the blitheness of childhood and the dignity of age. No one has more clearly understood the relation between a decorative design and the space it is to fill, no one has more fervently experienced the sense of the unseen world or been able more definitely to translate this sense into visual images. All this we can learn from even imperfect reproductions of his work; and in the case of the present book the inclusion of a number of illustrations from his sketch-book offers a chance to observe the working of Blake's mind before his artistic idea has become fixed. The resonance and brilliancy of his colour and the crispness of his line, it is needless to say, can be found only in the works that issued from Blake's own hand. Whether he was concerned with a water-colour drawing, a coloured print, or a line-engraving he gave it the stamp of his technical superiority which must from necessity evaporate in the process of reproduction. His indomitable personality cannot so be lost, and the more we see of Blake at even second or third hand the more coherent, original, and powerful does his art appear.

In his *Descriptive Catalogue* of 1809 he declares that "the merit of a Picture is the same as the merit of a Drawing. The dauber daubs his Drawings; he who draws his Drawings draws his Pictures. There is no difference between Raphael's Cartoons and his Frescoes, or Pictures, except that the Frescoes, or Pictures, are more finished."

This represents the frame of mind in which he undertook all his artistic work; the sane careful conscientious temper of the genuine artist who is never guilty of slurring execution in the name of inspiration. Blake's sketches are those of a fine craftsman in control of his instrument and of his own mind. To study them is inevitably to reach the conclusion that a delicately balanced intellect has been at work upon them. A number of these sketches are in the Print Room of the British Museum, but the most significant and interesting are to be found in the Manuscript Book from which we reproduce half a dozen pages.

No one familiar with Rossetti's life and also an admirer of Blake can fail to read with peculiar interest that passage in Mr. William Rossetti's biography of his brother which refers to the Blake Manuscript Book. It will be remembered that this book was offered to Rossetti, then a boy of nineteen, by an attendant in the British Museum for the sum of ten shillings, and that Rossetti, whose pockets were "in their normal state of depletion," applied to his brother for the money, purchased the book, and later copied out the verse contained in it, while his brother "did the like for the prose." Beside these literary contents, consisting of notes for poems, epigrams, and copy for Blake's *Advertisement* and his *Additions to the Catalogue for the year 1810*, the pages of the book are strewn with drawings, mostly sketches for designs which appear in Blake's illustrated or illustrative books. To an artist like Rossetti, the Rossetti of 1847, this acquisition was not merely a tonic to the imagination but a lesson of the highest importance in the use of an artist's tools. He learned from it how a conception presented itself to Blake's visualizing mind,

what its essentials were, what was the first expression of the idea and what were the details to be introduced after the first "arrows of desire" had reached their mark. Its yellow leaves bear the trace of the eager investigations made by that ardent Italian household into the origins of an art that they were well fitted to appreciate. We see, however, almost nothing of Blake's influence in Rossetti's work. In an occasional early design, such as the illustration to Coleridge's *Genevieve*, with its contrasting curved and straight lines producing an architectonic effect, we may trace characteristics of Blake's space composition, but the suggestion might have come to him as well from a Gothic or mediæval source, and as for that complete realization of swift motion in which Blake has no superior, and in modern art no equal, I can think of but one design of Rossetti's in which it is attempted: the 1850 compartment of *The Salutation of Beatrice*, in which an angel is flying over a field of lilies. It fairly may be assumed that the effect upon Rossetti of Blake's unintermittent flame of intellectual energy was negligible except so far as it stimulated his mind in the direction of his original tendencies and fattened his vocabulary with soothing invective against the Correggio type of artist. His interest in Blake continued keen, however, as his aid in preparing Gilchrist's *Life* of 1863 amply proves. In the supplementary chapter which contains his more important contributions to that *Life*, he says among other things:

"He (Blake) felt his way in drawing, notwithstanding his love of a 'bold determinate outline,' and did not get this at once. Copyists and plagiarists do that but not original artists, as it is common to suppose; they find a difficulty in developing the first idea. Blake

drew a rough dotted line with a pencil, then with ink, then colour, filling in cautiously, carefully. At the same time he attached very great importance to 'first lines,' and was wont to affirm: 'First thoughts are best in art, second thoughts in other matters.'" The Manuscript Book gives us an opportunity for comparison of Blake's "first lines" with later forms of the same design in a number of instances. I have studied its complicated pages at first hand, and have found in the rough drafts of Blake's powerful conceptions not only the freshness and vigour associated with initial impulses, but a certain sureness of execution that suggests intensity of conviction rather than caution, and that brings to mind Blake's own pronouncement: "Let a Man who has Made a drawing go on & on & he will produce a Picture or Painting, but if he chooses to leave off before he has spoil'd it he will do a Better Thing." I do not know of any drawings that Blake spoiled in the process of developing their possibilities, although he refers in his letters to many such, but the designs in the Manuscript Book make it clear that his original intention was extremely definite, that in these cases at least there was little error mixed with his tentative experiments, and that the "minutely appropriate execution" which he lavished on his ideas, with him, as with artists less opulently endowed with executive force, led now and then to a weakened version of his mental picture. That he was inclined to guard himself at every turn against such catastrophe, realizing the constant danger of its occurrence, is shown by a sentence in one of his letters to Dr. Trusler, a prospective patron.

After stating the titles of one or two compositions which he had in mind to make, he adds that he cannot "previously describe in

words" what he means to design, for fear that he should "evaporate the spirit" of his invention. He continues, characteristically, however, "But I hope that none of my designs will be destitute of infinite particulars which will present themselves to the contemplator." Judging from the drawings in the Manuscript Book the spirit of his invention took on form with an ease that could be the result only of the most vivid inner vision, and while his desire to improve the execution frequently brought about changes that increased in minor points the beauty of the design — he said himself in a letter to Hayley, concerning some delayed proofs, "I could not think of delivering the twelve copies without giving the last touches which are always the best" — his first touches are wholly free from the fetters of indecision or timidity. Among other drawings are studies for *The Gates of Paradise*. Mr. White owns two printed copies of this little volume, one of them a duodecimo containing the plates in an early state before the lettering, the other a large octavo containing the last revisions of the text and the plates in what probably is their final form. These two editions have been described by Mr. John Sampson in his valuable edition of Blake's *Poetical Works*, where the Manuscript Book is also described, but as Mr. Sampson had chiefly to do with Blake's literary product, the drawings have been left for further discussion. The variations between the sketches in the Manuscript Book and the finished designs in the printed books are exceedingly interesting, as are also the differences between the earlier and later editions of the printed work. In the splendid design for *Fire*, to take a conspicuous example, we have three distinct stages of development. First, the rough pencil sketch in the Manuscript Book, in which the

direction of the lines of the body, the spirited action of the head and the charming curves of the rising flames contrasting with and supplementing the curve of the extended arms show how thoroughly the decorative instinct ruled the artist's mind from the first, and also how the vitality of his subject was captured in the initial drawing. In the printed version the figure is reversed, the earlier impression representing it as rather slender — one of the "long spindle-nosed rascals" for whom Blake has expressed his abhorrence in one of his vehement notes. The modelling of the body in this edition is as cursory as possible, consisting of a few widely separated, coarse lines. The face has high, broad cheek-bones, and the eyes as in the sketch are open and uplifted.

In the later edition the background has been reworked, introducing the effect of light back of the figure, which has been extended at the sides to gain the appearance of greater stoutness, while a few indications of the scales with which Blake usually clothes his demons are seen. The modelling is rich and full, with stippled dots and fine lines added to the original rough shading; the dark contour line on the right side of the body is strengthened, the head has been given a squarer shape by the work on the adjoining background, the features are considerably changed and the eyes are closed. In this instance the last touches have certainly greatly improved the later print in comparison with the earlier, increasing the vigour of the representation and giving an aspect of power and decision to the composition. Comparing the final version with the sketch in the Manuscript Book, however, the gain is less obvious. Although the print has a force of execution that is lacking in the drawing, the latter has a kind of spiritual energy, a light adequacy

of statement, which has melted out of the firmer execution. The figure that rises from the flames in the drawing seems naturally to float upward as a part of the impalpable element, while in the print it has become definitely corporeal and the imagination is more positively taxed to entertain the idea. This may seem to be a meticulous distinction but it is one constantly encountered in the different versions of Blake's work, precisely because his imagination was so surcharged with the conception he was about to express that it gave abounding life to the first form found for it, and to keep this vitality unimpaired and undiminished required the exercise of consummate skill in the reworking of the design.

A notable instance of Blake's effort to recapture the first bloom of his impression may be found in the design for the text: "I have said to corruption, thou art my father; to the worm, thou art my mother and my sister." In the pencil sketch in the Manuscript Book the head with its Egyptian quality is sunk in mystery. The swathed form has the appearance of a mummy and the death-like compression and rigidity of the figure are eloquent of Blake's control over the spiritual atmosphere of his compositions. In the small edition of the printed design much of this effect is lost. The "hard determinate outline" of the graver has dissipated the soft mist of enchantment evoked by the flowing pencil line, and the face is commonplace and uninteresting in its blank marionette stare. In the large paper edition, however, the wonder has almost been wrought and by technical means entirely independent of those by which the first effect was gained. Nothing more emphatically illustrates Blake's emphatic assurance that execution is only the result of invention. In place of copying his first effect, which

apparently depended upon the veiled tenderness of the pencil line, he translated into terms of engraving the noble mystery of his conception and executed afresh his imagined figure with a success equal if not similar to that attained in his first impetuous translation of it on the page of his sketch book.

Occasionally the subject appears in more than one version in the Manuscript Book. The design for *Air* is drawn, for example, both in sepia and in pencil on the same page. A seated figure with the elbows on the knees and the hands clasped above the head is seen against a background of cloud. In the sepia sketch a considerable portion of the body shows between the chin and the knees. This part of the figure is in deep shadow. The pencil sketch shows the head lowered so that the chin rests on the right knee, the left elbow is dropped between the knees, and the upper part of the body is hidden.

In the small-paper copy of *The Gates of Paradise*, the lines are very rudely engraved, but the position of the figure follows that of the pencil sketch. The cloud is more varied in outline, billowing out to the left until it reaches the edge of the plate at the lower left corner. Some locks of hair that are not seen in either the pencil or the sepia sketch fly up from under the clasped hands, adding to the aspect of terrified distraction. The top of the left shoulder and the left upper arm which show in the pencil sketch but not in the sepia are obliterated.

In the large-paper edition the left shoulder and upper arm again show, darkly shaded with cross-hatching so that they tell against the sky, which is also darkly shaded with horizontal lines. A little more of the hair is shown, and the chin rests on the right

knee as in the pencil sketch. The bounding lines are darkened and more are added more fully to model the legs and arms. The arrangement of the light and shade in the cloud forms is changed to give more impressively the effect of continuity in line and mass to the general composition. The face is unlike any other version — additional lines about the eyes soften the look of terror conspicuous in the earlier print, and the corners of the mouth are changed to a milder curve. In the sepia and pencil sketches and in the earlier printed version the right shoulder is a round knob; in the later print the muscle connecting it with the back is shown, making a continuous curved line that passes back of the head. The caption in the large-paper edition has the inserted line "On Cloudy Doubts and Reasoning Cares." The design as it appears in my own copy of Gilchrist's *Life* is a sorry example of the evil done by poor reproduction, the pale shadows, the blotches and blurred outline almost destroying the original significance. To pass from the Manuscript Book sketches to the small printed edition, from that to the later edition, and finally to the Gilchrist version is to appreciate the desirability of seeing an artist's work grow under his hands in order to know the idea in his mind, and the absolute necessity of seeing originals if we are to judge accurately the merit of his execution.

Another design, the different states of which show many variations, is the one depicting a woman plucking a mandrake (Plate I of the series). In the Manuscript Book the sketch is quite fully worked out in sepia retouched with pen and ink. The woman's figure is long and slender and exceedingly spirited in action, as though she had been running in her eagerness to reach the spot

and had stooped to the mandrake almost before slackening her speed. Her flying hair lends to this effect of swift motion hardly checked. In the sketch the tree beneath which the mandrake child is growing occupies less room in the design than is the case in the printed books, and cuts more decoratively across the space. More of the child's body shows, also, and there are suggestions of other little mandrake children growing as in a flower-bed. The woman's left arm is re-drawn, or, to speak more accurately, a second left arm is drawn in a somewhat different position, hanging straighter down and coming closer to the knee. This second position is adopted in both of the printed versions, which in several details differ greatly from one another. The earlier impression shows the woman's figure with less work on it, the face in particular being very crudely modelled and unpleasant in line, with an expression that goes far toward justifying Swinburne's description of it — "half blind with fierce surprise and eagerness, half smiling with foolish love and pitiful pleasure"; the left leg is also ugly in drawing, the long impetuous outline being broken by a fold of the drapery which conceals the contour and interrupts its continuity half-way between the knee and the ankle. In the later impression the figure is much more vigorously defined, though still missing the lithe grace and energy of the sketch; the muscular development is more strongly indicated, and the left leg is freed from the encroaching drapery and its outline is now continuous. The foot is worked into a much more beautiful form and the face has become attractive, although slightly blurred and without the graciousness of expression found in the sketch. The head has become quite classic in shape and the hair has been drawn into a Greek knot

instead of flying loose as in the sketch. These changes and others, many of them so minute as to be almost imperceptible and quite indescribable, show Blake working toward that "clearness and precision" which he said were his chief objects in painting, and toward perfection of execution. His art, he most truly declared, was to find form and to keep it, and whatever defects may have crept into his completed work, it was never "smooth'd up and Nigled and Poco Pen'd," to use his own uncompromising phraseology. He could not, however, keep the dew upon his blossoms and also handle them, and all the sketches in the Manuscript Book that are in any sense complete compositions show a spontaneity even beyond that of the engravings and consequently beyond that of any contemporary or successor of Blake in art. Occasionally, as in the drawing for *Rain*, the soft blur of the pencil, increased no doubt by the additional blur of time, conveys an impression of "that infernal machine, called Chiaro Oscuro," against which Blake's verbal furies were launched from time to time; but commonly the pencil lines like those of the engravings are distinct and pure, and furthermore have a flexibility and subtle expressiveness hardly to be imagined by those familiar with the engraved work alone. These sketches, some of them scribbled over with memoranda, others crowded close with drafts of poems and biting epigrams, all of them intended solely for the eye of the artist, are to me more eloquent of Blake's commanding genius than the *Inventions to the Book of Job* or the amazing drawings for the *Jerusalem*.

Blake, however, was persistent in his tendencies and single in his aims. Like perhaps the majority of great inventors whose minds are filled with harmonious and related ideas, he continued

in his age to seek those things which he had sought in his youth, and to a great degree the same plastic forms satisfied him as caskets for his strange imaginations. Mr. John Sampson has called attention to the unity of his writings and also to the "absolute uniformity with which definite symbolical figures are used to express definite conceptions in his poetry." He clung with the same consistency to definite elements of design, repeating them in his work so often that they constitute a kind of signature, a special stamp of his individuality. His general attitude toward the two great elements of decorative art, form and movement, also remained unchanged throughout his life. They were always first with him, always much more important than colour and tone, always to be sought as the chief end of artistic effort. In spite of many variations of method and medium, excursions into the finally despised field of oil technic, attempts at portraiture, substitution of an elaborate kind of colour-printing for the austerities of pure line-engraving, and minor ups and downs of style and taste, Blake's art is unfailing in its life-communicating quality and continually conveys the idea of a soaring flame of imaginative energy enshrined in rigidly controlled forms. He is alone in his generation in his ability to express in the same design the quintessence of physical and mental energy and the static quality of absolute repose. A remarkable instance of the two qualities in one design so subtly combined as to seem the inevitable result of the artist's conception is the *Crucifixion* plate (*Jerusalem*, page 76), superficially reminiscent of Dürer's *Passion*, but how much more intense and impressive in its emotional significance! The Crucified, dimly seen through gloom, droops lifelessly from the cross, the face

retaining its mild beauty of expression. Beneath, the wide-flung arms of the worshipper greet the vision with such exultation as only an artist technically drilled as Blake was, and also concentrated upon the spiritual side of his subject, could evoke. There seems hardly more to the drawing than a few perpendicular and a few horizontal lines, yet it completely embodies the sentiment of the accompanying text in which occur these lines, as exquisite in their subdued passion as the drawing:

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.

It is seldom, however, that Blake's work is quite as simple as this, even in his earlier period. A monumental and impersonal character is given to his designs by architectonic arrangements in which his sense of form supports and corrects his sense of movement, and he seems as well to have sought continually that balance of effect which consists not only in relations of line and mass but in the relations of the mental drama to be illustrated. His per-

manent ideal was the vision of an earthly and material temple, as fair as the fairest ever built by man, solidly constructed and inhabited by aspirations, thoughts, and emotions for which the slightest vesture is too gross. He continually limited and organized form on the one hand while he augmented and accelerated movement on the other hand until he definitely achieved in his design a visible distinction between spirit and matter. The swifter his soul flies to heaven the more fixed and permanent does he make his earthly boundaries. In his *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* he declares that "energy is the only Life, and is from the Body; and Reason is the bound or outward circumference of Energy"; and also that "Energy is Eternal Delight." This eternal delight and this sharp bounding line limiting it appear in all his designs.

For the rushing, impetuous flight of his little figures, liberated, he persuades us, from the bonds of the flesh — his disembodied spirits meeting in heaven with immortal ardour; his angels and archangels descending like a bolt of lightning upon their imperial errands; his devils contending and striding to and fro upon the earth to work injury to human kind — Blake seems to have consulted chiefly that inner vision as to whose counsel he was eloquent. Not even Botticelli so powerfully conveys the sense of irresistible movement, of an impulse that sends to their destination all human and unearthly messengers as arrows are sent to a target and with an aim as concrete and single. Certainly none of the artists with whose work Blake is known to have been familiar gave him his model.

But for the firm and austere walls which he erected as his favourite symbol of the ponderable world he had an inexhaustible

mine of memorized forms to draw upon. In his boyhood, we learn from his biographers, he was sent by the wise Basire, engraver to the Society of Antiquaries, to make drawings of the tombs in Westminster Abbey and in other English churches. This he did with great skill and fidelity, sketching the tombs from every point of view, "frequently standing on the monument and viewing the figures from the top," and fixing in his mind thereby certain formal shapes that were to serve him to the end of his life in combinations of the greatest variety, but always recognizable as the fundamental framework of his picture. The round-topped arch, to take one conspicuous example, uniting columns, as it is seen in Romanesque buildings, appears continually in his designs and lends a basic dignity to the composition, however fantastic may be the subsidiary ornament. It is possible that Blake attached to this architectural form a symbolic significance such as he attached to the Rock and the Cave¹, but certainly we must seek for its origin in the Abbey drawings. Our concern with it, however, is limited to its effect upon his composition, which is to suggest beyond its enframing curve the freedom of a universe while holding the dominant figures of the design within its severe limitations. To glance through a single volume, the *Poems of Innocence and Experience*, for example, is to realize its pervasiveness and the value of its influence upon the observer, conveying as it does the sense of spaciousness under control, of the widest outlook brought within the range of an individual door or window.

¹ "The Rock and the Cave, constantly recurring figures in Blake's latter Prophetic Books, are invariably used as symbols of the state opposed to Jerusalem (or the life of spiritual liberty and imagination), in which 'Minute Particulars' of personal identity are crushed under the weight of reason and natural religion." Blake's Poetical Works: Edited by John Sampson, p. 307.

It is proof of Blake's thorough assimilation of his patiently won familiarity with this and other architectural forms that he uses them in his space composition often without hinting at their origin in architecture. In the exquisite illustration to the poem called *The Little Boy Found*, the arch which frames the inner composition consists of two trees placed symmetrically on either side of the design, their outer contours emphasized by a deep, shadow, while their inner contours are in full light. The branches meet above the radiant figures of the child and his heavenly guardian as they emerge from a misty shade. A somewhat more subtle arrangement is seen in the drawing for the preceding poem, *The Little Boy Lost*, where line and light are both used in the structural composition and made to contribute to the arch effect. On the right of the design is a straight tree-trunk with a curving bough, and on the left is the elongated oval of a blazing sun which assumes the function of a pillar of light supporting the arch on one side as the tree-trunk supports it on the other. In the second drawing for *The Little Black Boy* the over-arching tree is again used, with the bending form of the mild Christ repeating its slow curve and the dark straight form of the Little Black Boy serving as the left pillar. In the illustration for *Night* we have once more an arch and one column formed by a tree, while the other column is a flight of ascending angels. The illustration for the *Cradle Song* shows a woman bending over a cradle, her figure completing the arch begun by the curved hood of the cradle toward which she leans.

Nearly all, if not all, of Blake's books would yield similar examples of his use of the arch and also of a great number of other architectonic members and architectural details; sometimes with a

quite crude frankness of geometrical rendering, as on page 14 of the *Jerusalem*, where the arc spanning the heavens is the segment of a circle, the chord of which is the horizontal line of the prostrate figure on the ground; sometimes successfully distracting our attention from the plan of the composition by the wreathing of its formal skeleton with gay and lovely scenes from the natural world but never diminishing the loftiness of his style by a too familiar realism or mean or trivial accessories.

Occasionally, indeed, he introduces his beautifully proportioned ogees, his circles and spirals, the pointed as well as the round arch, the Doric gateway, and the mediæval tomb itself, with its marble pillow, its braided mouldings, its supine knight or lady in the stiff seemliness of death, as literally as though he had taken them directly from the cathedral monuments. His enormous designs for Young's *Night Thoughts* are instances. The plate illustrating *The Counsellor, King, Warrior, Mother and Child in the Tomb* shows unmistakably this source; the prone figures in the arched recess are none other than those of the Abbey. *The Soul hovering over the Body reluctantly parting with Life* is another plate in which occurs a mediæval bier, and still another is *The Death of the Good Old Man*, above whose stark limbs fly horizontal angels. In his designs for Miller's new edition of Bürger's *Lenore* (1796) he clearly called to his aid the marble forms which he had found such serviceable models. In the illustration to the last stanza where Lenore wakes to William's tumultuous affection we see the long recumbent figure rising from its stiff couch with almost a sense of watching the ancient effigy of Queen Philippa open astonished eyes upon the stony composure of her tomb. These more or less

literal transcripts or at least close adaptations of his early studies to the demands of his later art demonstrate at least the excellence of his training. Nothing could exceed the elegance of the draughtsmanship or the learned precision with which the relations of lines and spaces are planned, and the same beautiful execution is seen in his copies from Michelangelo and others that are now in the British Museum. He speaks from his own experience in one of his comments on Reynold's *Discourses*. "If he means," he says with reference to a dull statement by Sir Joshua, "that Copying correctly is a hindrance, he is a Liar, for that is the only School to the Language of Art."

It was a school in which Blake had been a diligent scholar; but having mastered his language he was not guilty of confining it to the hackneyed phrases of the copy-book. Even where he drew, as we have seen, upon his early lessons and models for his constructions, the depth of his emotion, his amazing capacity to communicate his mood, his power of charging his design with fresh feeling, made him at all times the most original of artists. We may say that he adopted for his type of aged man one made familiar by Michael Angelo and kept it to the end; that the gnarled nudes of his *Jerusalem* suggest those of Dürer's prints; that the long-limbed, deep-chested youths and maidens of his illustrations to *Paradise Lost*, with their small heads and noble gesture, bring hints to us of Greek marbles, but at the same moment we recognize that it is never the likeness to a prototype that strikes first upon the mind, but, instead, the personal character and rich significance of the design controlling all minor resemblances. And in the finer drawings where the linear definition becomes less fixed

and hard, where the artist insists least upon that article of his creed which affirms that "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"; where he allows a tender atmosphere to fill his spacious arrangements with the bloom and mystery of spring mornings, he shows a mastery of space-composition which could not have been learned from a lifetime of mere copying but must have sprung from an imagination haunted by majestic visions. The water colour entitled *Creation of Eve*, which, reduced to its linear framework, conveys but a weak impression of the composition, is built up with masses of light, half-tone and pale colour, to an effect large and stern in its suggestions of an empty world roofed by the dome of the sky, yet filled with floating mists and the soft radiance of dawn. The familiar round arch may be distinguished in the panel of light behind the figures of the Creator and Eve, and no Templar Knight lies more rigid in his death sleep than Adam upon the flowering earth; the upright figures have a columnar strength and symmetry, and their position suggests the construction of an inner arch or doorway through which we look into the warm light surrounded by the dim twilight of a chaotic world. Yet there is not, as in many of the drawings already referred to, a too obviously scientific arrangement. That "infernal machine called Chiaro Oscuro" intervenes to clothe the scene with captivating beauty. The spectator is soothed by the cool sweetness of that morning air bathing the primeval forms and filling the mighty void, before his mood ascends to meet the solemnity of the severe composition.

Such a drawing represents Blake at his imaginative best; but it is far from being unequalled in his accomplishment. The famous design called *Plague*, also a water colour, is hardly less noble in its arrangement of lines and masses or less expressive of the sentiment of the subject. We behold women weeping over their dead, a bier borne by tall classic figures, a man bending over an open grave, and a background filled with a dwelling and a portion of a church. The straight lines of casements, roofs, and walls, the squares of the pavement, the low arch of the church door, give great clearness and a certain rigidity to the design. In opulent contrast are the large full curves of the figures, of the mounting flames of distant fires, and of the billowing smoke. The colour is almost one tone of yellowish gray deepened with purple tints in the shadows. The Hellenic spirit of the whole is so marked that it seems much more like an illustration to the *Electra* of Euripides than the expression of modern sentiment.

The secret of Blake's power to communicate such moods, moods as foreign to our common temper as those induced by poetry of the highest quality, lies in part in his intensity of motive. He makes extraordinary sacrifices to attain his end, subordinating or eliminating everything that does not contribute to the sense of grandeur, sorrow, solemnity, or joy, as the case may be. Where he wishes to convey a sense of swift motion he cuts off ruthlessly all other appeals to our æsthetic pleasure. In the figure striding through flames at the head of the third page of the *Book of Urizen* we translate the wide stretch of limb, the uninterrupted flow of the principal lines, the rhythmic gesture, the buoyancy of the form, into an impression of rushing motion that leaves us only dimly

conscious of the strong sinews, the powerful frame, the muscles reacting to the effort. This figure, however, has enough modelling of surface to suggest a substantial body. But where, as in the case of the title page for the *Book of Thel*, and some of the designs for the *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, and for the *Europe*, the effect of the movement of disembodied thought and feeling is desired, Blake does not hesitate to show us abstract forms with merely the hint of human shape, soaring like flames, or driven as leaves by a mighty wind, and with imaginations powerfully excited, we demand of them nothing more than that they should thus soar and thus be driven. A corporeal form, a muscle, a feature would impede, we instinctively admit, that irresistible flight through space.

Critics who resent this arbitrary use of the human figure now as an architectural member in the structure of Blake's design, and again serving merely to render values of movement, and who recall Blake's contempt of models, are inclined, perhaps, to lay too great a stress upon his unwillingness to follow nature. It is true that he said quaintly, "Natural objects always did and now do, weaken, deaden, and obliterate imagination in me," and, again, "I assert for myself that I do not behold the outward creation, and that to me it is hindrance and not action," but he was speaking from the standpoint of a trained artist, one who has chosen his method and his field, and is beyond the initial stages of his craftsmanship. In those initial stages his study of natural objects was sufficient to furnish him with material for the work of a lifetime. He was not a portraitist but a poet and designer, and while the portraitist may be these also, portraiture is not essential either to design or to poetry. He has himself stated the case as

follows: "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," for "portrait painting is the direct contrary to designing and historical painting in every respect."

It would be, however, an unpardonable blunder to assume that he was indifferent to nature or ignorant of the pictorial aspect of the natural world. He had learned his language of art not only from copying the works of man but from copying the trees and fields and animals encountered in his long rambles on the outskirts of London. He had supplied himself with innumerable observations and records of nature upon which he could draw at will after they had become familiar to him, and, like the forms of the Abbey monuments, they appear and reappear in his designs. How often has he not used in his decorative borders the tendrils and fruit clusters, the broad leaves and twisting stalk of the grapevine that grew in his garden? The oak trees in whose shade he rested rise in majestic strength above the dark sheep of the English meadows clustering characteristically in sculpturesque masses, haunting the distances of his rural landscapes, or standing singly with bent heads enhancing the symmetry of his composition. The little greens on which his rustics dance and sing, the winding streams, the children leaping in play, the modelled shapes of the hills with their bland sweep across the horizon, the simple huts and beautiful little churches that nestle in their hollows, all testify to the accuracy of his vision and his hand. But he saw nature in terms of art. An anecdote told of him in Gilchrist's *Life* illustrates the constant play of his transforming imagination over the familiar scene. "The other evening," he said to a group of interested listeners, "taking

a walk, I came to a meadow, and at the farther corner of it I saw a fold of lambs. Coming nearer, the ground blushed with flowers; and the wattled cote and its woolly tenants were of an exquisite pastoral beauty. But I looked again, and it proved to be no living flock, but beautiful sculpture." When asked where he saw this, he touched his forehead, replying, "Here"; and he may have meant that the whole vision was imaginary; but how many times must he not in fact have looked thus upon the fair fields near Dulwich or Blackheath, mentally turning their tranquil aspect into forms of artistic expression. He used a certain number of natural objects, notably the sheep, the tree, and the vine, somewhat as a writer may use special words and construction with a consciousness of their communicating his inner mood as no others could; and this very repetition aids in their effectiveness. They also, like his arches and pillars, become a part of his style, indissolubly connected in our minds with his way of looking at things and his choice of things to see. That he did not see the outdoor world as most of his contemporaries saw it is obvious; but that his references to nature were constant and appreciative cannot be doubted. When he said, "None could have other than natural or organic thoughts if he had none but organic perceptions," he uttered a truth to which the work of all genuinely imaginative artists testifies. In order to create life or the appearance of life it is necessary indeed to have "organic perceptions," discriminating between the essential and the non-essential in things seen; from such discriminations spring vital and poetic works in which the objects of the visible world play their valuable part, in truth, but which are inspired and quickened by imagination. Blake saw imaginatively whether

he looked within or without for his models; and he may be said to have seen as truly as the purely imitative worker whose literal renderings are devoid of spirit.

With what seems in him a surprisingly patient effort, he once attempted to make this clear to the Reverend Dr. Trusler, and put his case more vividly and justly than it can be put for him:

"I see everything I paint in this world," he wrote to this difficult and dissatisfied patron; "but everybody does not see alike. To the eyes of a miser a guinea is far more beautiful than the sun, and a bag worn with the use of money has more beautiful proportions than a vine filled with grapes. The tree which moves some to tears of joy is in the eyes of others only a green thing, which stands in the way. Some see Nature all ridicule and deformity, and by these I shall not regulate my proportions; and some scarce see Nature at all. But to the eyes of the man of imagination Nature is Imagination itself. As a man is, so he sees. As the eye is formed such are its powers. You certainly mistake when you say that the visions of fancy are not to be found in this world. To me this world is all one continued vision of fancy or imagination, and I feel flattered when I am told so."

And in many of his marginal notes to Reynold's *Discourses*, Blake emphasizes the value of study from nature as preliminary to imaginative drawing. Where Reynolds declares: "How incapable those are of producing anything of their own, who have spent much of their time in making finished copies is known to all who are conversant with our art," Blake responds, elaborating the statement already quoted, "This is most false, for 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 one is: the bad artist seems to copy a great deal; the good one really does copy a great deal." Where Reynolds says on the other hand that he very much doubts "whether a habit of drawing correctly what we see will not give a proportionable power of drawing correctly what we imagine," Blake claps him on the shoulder with the response: "This is Admirably Said. Why does he not always allow as much?" And at the head of the *Second Discourse* Blake writes: "What is laying up materials but copying? Thus we see him pursuing the laborious path of genius in the well-known fashion; laying up his materials, making himself master of his tools, correctly copying appearances, yet never losing his sense of the large uses to which he must put his smallest effort. It is precisely this long labour of preparation that enabled him to respond in moments of inspiration to the mystic voices commanding him with apparently such unpremeditated art. If his designs seem unexpected and instantaneous it is because the ideas upon which they are formed lay so long ripening in his mind, and the executive hand was so many years in training.

The persistence and uniformity of his artistic theories extend to his types, which are unchanging throughout his work. In more than one instance these have their origin in the "visions" that have lent to Blake's history an element of unreality irritating to the skeptic who sees "with, not through the eye," and endlessly fascinating to the student of hagiography. His Satan he beheld one evening when he was standing at his garden door in Lambeth, a "horrible grim figure, scaly speckled, very awful, stalking down-

stairs" toward him. The Ancient of Days hovered over his head at the top of his staircase in No. 13 Hercules Buildings, and these two symbolic forms continue essentially the same in the various compositions in which they appear. The Satan "scaly-speckled" is a peculiarly magnificent conception, usually accompanied with darting flames, and wearing the haughty aspect appropriate to a Prince of Darkness. In clear and bland contrast to this stalking form, which in the coloured plates is iridescent with darkly shining blues and greens, is the fair, incomparably gracious and benign Christ, lofty and commanding but with a supreme gentleness that illustrates Blake's reiterated article of faith: "The Spirit of Jesus is continual forgiveness of sin."

These features of Blake's design, fixed human types, architectonic composition, facts of nature transformed into truths of art, are held in common with many another artist of first importance. What separates him specifically from his fellows is the union in him of two types of artist seldom found together. He decorated his page as learnedly as the Florentines their chapel walls, at the same time he interpreted spiritual moods with the fervour of a Savonarola. He was not only a Decorator of extraordinary power, he was an Illustrator in the sense given to the word by Mr. Berenson. As the first he adapted his forms to the space they were to fill with all the cunning of the best mediæval illuminators. In his printed books his text and his ornament are absolutely harmonious. To realize how each was complementary to the other it is only necessary to compare in Gilchrist's *Life* those pages which are fac-similes of pages in the *Jerusalem* with those upon which are printed reproductions of the designs in conjunc-

tion with ordinary type. His space composition is as dignified and ample in his page decorations as though intended for the wall of a temple. He never confused art with emotion, yet he never failed to make it the vehicle of emotion. In power to communicate a mood he has no superior; he can conduct his orchestra of line and colour in a way to fill the mind now with the sense of hieratic dignity, now with the joy of soaring melody, now with the freshness of pure air and simple sounds, now with the dread of crashing storms and furious whirlwinds, now with the awful quiet of irrevocable doom. He endows his figures with an immense significance, yet he never allows them to break the bounds of formal decorative arrangement. That interpreters are still working with confessions of tentativeness and inadequacy over the intricate maze of his doctrine in the *Prophetic Books* is a sign of the difficulties that would await an interpreter of the spiritual intention of his drawings, but the spiritual intention whether cryptic or clear is never permitted to clog the artistic interest of the design. That is always present and always extraordinary. Nevertheless it is indissolubly connected with the spiritual intention. Blake's genius lay deeper than the gifts of the designer and decorator which he possessed in such plenitude; it was that of the psychologist who knows the tempers and weathers of the human soul. The human soul, in fact, was the book of his illustration but we shall presently see how well it pleased him to work in a kind of indirect collaboration at his monumental task.

His attitude toward colour was entirely characteristic and consistent with his theories of art. Although endowed with a singularly delicate sense of colour he nevertheless believed colour to be the

great stumbling block of all artists not blessed with inventive imagination and a passion for form. "In a work of art," he declared with his customary emphasis, "it is not fine tints that are required but fine forms. Fine tints without fine forms are always the subterfuge of the blockhead." He felt, however, the supreme importance of "fine tints" where there was to be any colouring at all. He had the passion of the true colourist for pure unsullied hues and carefully calculated harmonies. Writing of one of Fuseli's pictures which had been attacked on the side of its colour, he said: "The effect of the whole is truly sublime on account of that very colouring which our critic calls black and heavy. The German flute colour which was used by the Flemings (they call it burnt bone) has possessed the eye of certain connoisseurs that they cannot see appropriate colouring, and are blind to the gloom of a real terror."

And in a letter to Thomas Butts he writes: "Let me observe that the yellow-leather flesh of old men, the ill-drawn and ugly old women, and above all, the daubed black-and-yellow shadows that are found in most fine, aye, and the finest pictures, I altogether reject as ruinous to effect, though connoisseurs may think otherwise." This sentiment is shared by the Impressionists whose work marks the progress of art in the nineteenth century, and a very brief examination of Blake's coloured drawings suffices to show him in advance of his time in many other tenets of his belief.

That his colouring should be "appropriate" was of the highest importance with him. He used it as he used his line, to illustrate the story of human aspirations and emotions. Every tint in his coloured works is a part of his intellectual plan and as far as possible removed from the unimaginative realism of imitative painting.

He held in contempt the mere reproduction of the appearance of things without reference to their function as the expression of an idea. "A man sets himself down with colours, and with all the articles of painting," he said, "he puts a model before him, and he copies that so neat as to make it a deception. Now let any man of sense ask himself one question: Is this art? Can it be worthy of admiration to anybody of understanding?"

To handle colour in a way worthy of admiration to people of understanding required the use of imagination he held, and it is rather in defence of imagination than of his own skill that he speaks in his candid appreciation of his picture of the *Ancient Britons*. "The flush of health in flesh," he writes, "exposed to the open air, nourished by the spirits of forests and floods, in that ancient happy period which history has recorded, cannot be like the sickly daubs of Titian or Rubens. Where will the copier of nature, as it now is, find a civilized man who has been accustomed to go naked? Imagination only can furnish us with colouring appropriate, such as is found in the Frescoes of Raphael and Michael Angelo: the disposition of forms always directs colouring in works of true art. As to a modern Man stripped from his load of clothing, he is like a dead corpse. Hence Rubens, Titian, Correggio, and all of that class, are like leather and chalk; their men are like leather and their women like chalk, for the disposition of their forms will not admit of grand colouring; in Mr. B's Britons, the blood is seen to circulate in their limbs; he defies competition in colouring."

This searching for significance in colour as in everything else contributed, of course, to the life and passion of Blake's work and made him dear to those who, like the young Pre-Raphaelites,

considered intensity of feeling of supreme importance in art. Although his theory is marred in its expression by characteristic animadversions upon great painters with whom he was not in sympathy and of whose works he had the most imperfect knowledge, it fits in with all his other theories and with it he achieved remarkable victories, presenting to the vision imaginary scenes in which is felt the pulse of life throbbing more ardently than in any realistic painting of the actual world.

If, for example, we should examine the coloured copy of the *Europe* from which the illustrations for the present volume are taken, we should find the emotional quality of the colouring in complete harmony with the emotional character of the design and of the theme forming the basis of the design. The very title-page, with its serpent rampant, suggests by its soft rich tones, by the broken splendour of the reptile's spotted skin, and the dim, clouded background, a text of mystery and eloquence. The frontispiece representing the Ancient of Days striking the first circle of the Earth is a magnificent introduction to the general scheme of colour maintained with few exceptions throughout the book — the colour of sunlight and flame against darkness. The lines illustrated are not those of Blake's text but those of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, book vii, ll. (lines) 225-231:

“He took the golden Compasses, prepar’d
In God’s Eternal store, to circumscribe
This Universe and all created things:
One foot he center’d, and the other turn’d
Round through the vast profunditie obscure;
And said, thus farr extend, thus farr thy bounds,
This be thy just Circumference, O World.”

Not only does the majestic kneeling figure, concentrated upon its mighty task, convey the required impression, but the resonant gold of the orb from which the King of Glory leans, joined to the red of the clouds and the dusk of the

“ . . . vast immeasurable abyss
Outrageous as a sea, dark, wasteful, wild,”

intensifies it thrice over.

In the design depicting Enitharmon lifting the mantle of cloud from the sleeping Orc, we have a marvellous hint of the subdued blaze of suns slumbering in purple heavens, and the plate in which appears the figure of the demon attended by two angels gives the contrary aspect of night, the moonlit and starlit twilight, the pale blue and yellow robes of the angels glinting with a cool lustre on either side of the sombre Satan, and the colour tone of the whole illustrating in an elusive yet convincing manner the first line of the text upon the page:

“Now comes the night of Enitharmon’s woe.”

Accompanying Enitharmon’s melodious cry to “Ethinthus, queen of waters” is a border of gaily coloured birds, snails, butterflies, serpents, and spiders which flash in and out of the text, gleaming notes of emphasis upon such charming allusions to the natural world as that comparing the children of Ethinthus to

“ . . . gay fishes on the wave, when the cold moon drinks the dew.”

The final illustration is for the lines describing the genius of revolution awakened from sleep and striding to his work of destruction:

But terrible Orc, when he beheld the morning in the East,
Shot from the heights of Enitharmon,
And in the vineyards of red France appear'd the light of his fury.

The sun glow'd fiery red;
The furious terrors flew around,
On golden chariots raging with red wheels dripping with blood
The Lions lash their wrathful tails.

This plate shows a figure instinct with energy, moving swiftly and forcibly dragging reluctant ones with him, followed by flames. The conflagration of yellow and red upon the page gives the poem the air of setting as it rose in the light of fiery planets.

Any of Blake's coloured books would yield similar instances of his endeavour to illustrate through his colouring the mood of his text. We may say, if we like, that in later years under the influence of the rising school of water-colourists he turned from light tints and washes to heavier pigment and more elaborate and violent colour schemes, but the evolution followed that of his poetry and seems to me to be governed entirely by his theory of emotional and intellectual illustration.

In the fine collection of water-colour drawings now in the Print Room of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts we see Blake's colour untrammelled by his mechanical processes and exhibiting to a high degree his care for the "character" of a subject as he called that quality which differentiates one thing from another in the minutest

particulars. Conspicuous among these designs are the ones illustrating the Plagues of Egypt. The technical beauty of the washes of colour in several of the series, their delicate precision, the clearness of definition in the tones without hardness of edge or dryness of texture, the light, fresh quality of the colour devoid of crudity and innocent of vaporous indecision, the lively calligraphic line, bring them very near perfection in the difficult and well-nigh lost art of "wash-drawing"; yet the value of the colour in the expression of the idea, so passionately and positively conceived, is perhaps the most extraordinary characteristic they have.

The design for *Famine* is almost a monochrome of violet gray, warmed with yellow — "very terrible and grimly quiet," Mr. William Rossetti calls it in his annotated list. The tomb-like vault of stone, the austere line of the hills in the background, the long straight lines of the figure, all contribute to the effect of fading vitality, of waning vigour, and no colour-scheme could more completely suggest the faintness of starvation than this flickering gray sinking into cold purplish shadows and rising into wan light.

The design for *Pestilence* no less forcibly communicates the sentiment of the subject, but with a more varied and less limited treatment. A demon covered with parti-coloured scales stretches out huge arms from which a visible miasma pours down upon rushing, frightened figures seen in the pale light of torches. Between the legs of the demon is seen a small house with an angel in the doorway. The demon strides lightly and powerfully upon his devastating way, filled with the energy of his strength and oblivious to all human emotions. No wrath or sense of cruelty is in his face. With a woeful yet immobile expression and with a graceful

motion and blithe gesture he distributes bereavement. Beneath him, men and women faint and fall or fling despairing arms in lovely attitudes. The agony of their expressions is balanced and corrected by the bland sweetness of the flowing lines. It is chiefly the colour that renders the impression of horror. A strange malignity is suggested by the dusky background mysteriously blurred as by a film of smoke, the blue lights streaming from the figure of the demon, the glowing crimson eyes and jet of flame colour on the head; and the white light of the torches completes the dramatic scheme. The contrast between the depth and mystery of the colour attained apparently by a considerable amount of reworking, and the large clear washes of the *Famine* which are in the tradition of the early "stained manner," shows that Blake, though independent of the realist's desire to copy textures and incidental effects of light and shade, was not confined by any rigid limitations in the use of his medium. To get his effect he would use quite opposite methods, and although he clung with the best possible result to the pen outline in most of his work, he was capable of entirely obliterating it where he felt the need of atmospheric depth to produce an emotional impression.

An intense effect of murky terror is again given in the design entitled *The King of Babylon in Hell* (also in the Boston Museum). The red robe in this superb piece of colour might be by Titian's own hand — that Titian of whom Blake cheerfully affirmed: "Such Idiots are not Artists." A rich blue plays over the scaled breast of Lucifer with a metallic gleam. His arm is thrown out with magnificent energy of gesture, and here as elsewhere he corresponds to the Miltonic Satan, the brilliant son of the morning whose form

“had yet not lost
All her original brightness, nor appeared
Less than Archangel ruined, and the excess
Of glory obscured.”

About his imperious figure the fires of hell burn in low dusky tones of red and orange. Simple and few as the colours are, their choice and combination adequately support the epic conception; and the treatment of the background is sufficiently vague and generalized to suggest the dim echoing cavern of Milton's Hell. In a design with such a message to convey, vagueness becomes itself a “minute particular” in Blake's sense of the term, that helps to establish the identity of the idea; and the crispness and positiveness gained by the use of the pen outline wherever he desired especially to “define the parts” keeps the drawing decided while emphasizing the depth of the atmospheric background.

In thus adapting his treatment to his conception Blake's tact was impeccable and his skill adequate. A very large number of his water-colour drawings, however, are in the style of the *Famine* — some of them hardly so much as washed with colour, merely stained with thin tints so lightly as to make them seem unfinished in comparison with the full hues of the colour-printed books. Notwithstanding, these faintly tinted drawings convey the idea with as much poetry and distinction as any of the more splendid works. The texture unimpaired by abrasion, the dignity of the broad stretches of monochrome, the imaginative value of the slight suggestions of colour in place of complete harmonies, give them the charm of serenity. In them Blake's energy is subdued.

By his handling of the colour in consonance with the noble forms he transports us into an ideal mood of quietness and revery, and it is interesting to note that in conspicuous instances this mood is evoked by a subject drawn from Milton.

The design depicting *Raphael and Adam in Conversation, Eve ministering to them*, one of a series of nine subjects from *Paradise Lost*, conveys in a peculiar degree this sense of pleasant rest and peace such as may belong to dreams of Eden. The figures have a mingled brightness and majesty quite in harmony with the Miltonic ideal, and the entire scene realizes Milton's stately verbal picture. In the background are a low hill and a plain on which a wolf and an elephant, an ostrich and a peacock, are in friendly juxtaposition. In the distance are other animals, a lion, a flock of sheep, a cow, and horses. From a knoll in the centre of the background springs the Tree, and about its trunk curls the body of the serpent, his head resting on a crotch of the branches whence he looks reflectively at the figures of Adam and Eve and the Angel. Eve's superb form is the centre of the composition, rising erect and graceful within an arch of palms and flower sprays. Raphael sits at the right, his arms upraised, pointing aloft. His face is fair and stern, his wings spring upward and meet like curving flames above his head, a crown, the spikes of which also suggest flames, is on his blond hair. Adam sits on the other side of Eve, his palms outspread in a gesture of deprecation. Eve holds out to him a heavy bunch of purple grapes, in the other hand is a shell-shaped cup which she offers to Raphael. The ground is covered with delicate flowers and Gothic ornament is naïvely suggested in the framework of the bench and table, which seem, nevertheless,

to spring from the ground as a natural growth. The colouring throughout is pale and soft, light greens, violets and blues predominating, and the whole effect has an indescribable blithe mildness as if the action were taking place indeed in an irradiated atmosphere of celestial regions, where it is easy to breathe freely and natural to be glad, where glorious forms and pure colours are the rule and boundless space opens out on every side beyond the particular scene.

Another of the same series, *The Temptation of Eve*, though less beautiful in tone, less homogeneous and spacious, still has the essential quality of appropriateness in the colour. The branches of the Tree and the fruit fall in a shower from the top of the picture, the fruit glowing with an inner light

“—of fairest colour mixed,
Ruddy and gold.”

Eve eats her forbidden apple from the jaws of the enticing serpent. According to Milton,

“Earth felt the wound, and nature from her seat,
Sighing through all her works, gave signs of woe.”

and Blake, fulfilling this description, causes zigzag flashes of lightning to play luridly about the lovely sinner over whom domes a blackening sky with gray and crimson clouds. The colours of the serpent are gay rather than sinister, and the boding sky with its lightnings is the only hint given of approaching misfortune.

It is exceedingly interesting to turn from these majestic interpretations of Milton's vast poem to the little set of illustrations to

the *Comus*, and to observe the quick-minded ease with which Blake's point of view changes under the dominion of his subject. The pretty masque that belongs to Milton's beauty-loving youth is enacted in Blake's graceful drawings with the enchantment of soft pale tints and simple execution. A delightful humour plays over the different scenes. The advent of Comus and his rabble rout racing down the hill, long-limbed and gleeful, their arms tossed above their heads making a beautiful pattern against the sky, is painted in delicate and pale but bright colours. The scenes are those of fancy, not those of imagination, and there is no terror in them. The drawing of the revellers at table, the fiery lion, the mild-faced elephant, the long-beaked solemn bird, the cat serving with bristling mustachios, is filled with the atmosphere of fairy-land, as quaint and spontaneous as the poetry of Christina Rossetti when she transmutes the reality of the animal world into romance. In fact, these eight designs, unimportant as they are in the sum of Blake's works, leave the spectator idly wishing that he had oftener indulged himself in this frankly childlike idealism, so unlike are they to the work of any other illustrator, and so expressive of that enchanted mood which he awakened in his early poetry by such lines as the familiar "Piping down the valleys wild."

It is curious that Blake should have shown himself so completely in sympathy with the remote Milton whose colder genius would seem inhospitable enough to Blake's fire of inspiration; but it is true that these illustrations, both to *Paradise Lost* and to *Comus*,¹ are in a very literal sense illuminations, lighting up the beauty of passages in the poems that otherwise would be lost on all but the

¹ I have not seen the series of illustrations to *Paradise Regained*.

most attentively appreciative readers. We know from them how the Miltonic characters looked and moved in the pictorial world. Comus and the Lady, Adam and Eve and the angels take on a personality that wins our belief in them. From Milton's imposing generalities we turn to Blake's specifications with a sense of finding ourselves awake when we had thought ourselves dreaming. It is as strange a world surely as any Milton imagined, but we are in, not out of it, and we see as he intended us to see, with our spiritual vision. It is evident that to Blake Milton was neither vague nor general — in his *Advertisement* he speaks of drawing "with a firm and decided hand at once, like Fuseli and Michael Angelo, Shakespeare and Milton." The true point of approach between Blake and Milton is probably to be found in their avoidance of the colloquial and familiar in their imagery. Where Milton uses pleasant common incidents of every-day life in his poetry — such as the comfortable meal served by Eve to Adam and Raphael in Eden — he elevates them to a plane of superhuman significance by eliminating from them all homely detail, all touches of human vulgarity. Where Blake employs ordinary intimate features of his own environment in his composition, he likewise so closely and inextricably links them to his epic ideal as to make them seem a part of an unreal world, precisely as the features of those we know best become unfamiliar to us under the stress of unusual emotion or exaltation. His "natural port" as Johnson says of Milton's, "is gigantick loftiness." Also Milton, like Blake, illustrated an abstract conception with concrete figures, so vividly defined as to seem realistic even where they are farthest removed from portraiture.

If we turn from Blake's drawings for Milton's poems to his

drawings for Scriptural themes we see even more clearly the analogy between the two poetic interpreters. Each works upon his theme with an imagination that shapes definitely for itself the figures of such abstractions as Death and Satan and the characters of the Old Testament, and each invents a setting or background for these that shall heighten the significance of the drama in which they take part. For each, significance is the chief end of their style. Not a word or line, not a fragment of imagery or a note of colour is used that is not considered with reference to its effect in the whole design and its contribution to the meaning.

In the design of which our frontispiece is a reproduction, we have an excellent example of Blake's creative imagination at work upon a literary theme. It may appear on first thought that "creative imagination" is hardly the expression appropriate to the illustration of a theme already described by another artist. If we remember, however, that the function of the imagination is to invent, and also keep in mind the fact that Blake's illustrations are based primarily on emotional resemblances and convey the life of the idea, we need not hesitate to consider him as much a creator in his illustrative as in his purely original designs. Our frontispiece represents the vision of Ezekiel as it is described in the first chapter of the book of the prophet Ezekiel. We see "the likeness of the four living creatures" with every one four faces and every one four wings, and the hands of a man under their wings, and this appearance is stepping out of the eyed wheels, "as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel with their rings full of dreadful eyes;" we see also above the heads of the living creatures the likeness of a throne, and "the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it," and

round about a brightness "as the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain." No one reading the Scriptural version with the pictorial version before them will be disposed to deny the power of Blake's rendering in which all that is exuberant and fantastic in the Hebrew symbolism is translated with the poetic passion and dignity of the verbal picture. Neither will anyone familiar with the full swell and noble energy of Milton's less impetuous style fail to perceive a similarity between his vision of Scriptural scenes and Blake's own.

How Miltonic, again, is the water-colour drawing *The Repose of the Holy Family in Egypt*, now in the possession of the Metropolitan Museum, New York. What power of suggestion is in the quaintly conceived Eastern scenery with its monstrous palm-tree, its little winding river, and distant pyramids. Beyond the arch of the foreground within which the mother and child sit bathed in light, stretches the landscape into illimitable sky; just above the horizon looms a great sun; at the left the donkey stands in the stream drinking, a delicate monster that once seen is not forgotten, beautifully drawn but with leafy markings on his "vegetated" body and with a bristling serrate mane. At the feet of the travellers on the brink of the stream are clusters of small flowers such as Milton describes in *Paradise*, "of slender stalk" with heads that hang "drooping, unsustained." The figure of Joseph clad in a long robe stands at the right. A broad-brimmed hat is on his head and his face is patriarchal in type. Mary, deep-chested and ample in form, sits with a certain stately carriage, lifting her small head, which is nobly set on a columnar neck, toward Joseph. The child is something of a manniken without any babyish feature.

His mother has given him her breast, but she neither touches him nor looks toward him; her placid gaze is quite impersonal.

Nothing could be less in the spirit of the modern Madonna or more in the spirit of Milton when his theme is Scriptural. The distinction of the design, the large freedom of the pattern, the majestic framework of line and mass, the unreal yet definite imagery, are all Miltonic, and we feel in looking at this as in looking at many other paintings and drawings by Blake — the entire Job series for example — that he owed to the English poet far more than to any Italian painter the determination of the form in which he cast his more especially illustrative art. While acquaintance with Milton's poetry could not, of course, teach him the secret of admitting to his picture only what would tend to its unity and the breadth of its relations, it could teach him the beauty of severe forms and support him in the choice of intellectual expression. At nineteen years of age Milton wrote that he would choose to leave trifles for a grave argument

Such as may make thee search the coffers round
Before thou clothe my fancy in fit sound;
Such where the deep transported mind may soar
Above the wheeling poles, and at Heaven's door
Look in, and see each blissful deity,
How he before the thunderous throne doth lie.

This choice Blake also made and himself looked in at the door of such a heaven to behold the thunderous throne and those who lay before it. The words of the one poet seem to have been uttered for the designs of the other, and it is easy to see how Blake's mind

would have been companioned on lonely heights by Milton's stern energy, and also by that virtue, "peremptory and impassioned," which demanded on the instant an ideal justice.

Thus to find in masters of language rather than in masters of drawing and painting the counsellors upon whom Blake depended for that intense and concentrated sympathy of mind which spurs an artist to effective expression might lead to the conclusion that he was deficient in the true painter's quality, that the idea and not the execution occupied his attention, that he had intellect rather than vision in the painter's sense of the latter word, that he could think and dream but could not see. The contrary is true. While he, desiring to express through his compositions his own emotion, dismissed as irrelevant all facts not directly instrumental in communicating that emotion, his power of seeing was greater than that of the ordinary observer. Otherwise he would not have felt so keenly the intrusion of multitudinous nature upon his mood when he was in the act of executing an emotional conception. Milton could not have stimulated his genius as he did had he not himself been concerned with a visible world. The fact that in his physical blindness the latter looked inward for his scenes of Paradise, filling them with "select and holy images," makes these scenes none the less of a kind to capture the imagination of a painter. Blake also could close his eyes in voluntary blindness and behold the verdurous walls, the large rivers, the shaggy hills, the bowers and groves, the fruits and blossoms of an imaginary Eden. "You have only to work up imagination to the state of vision, and the thing is done," he said; and it is not unnatural — indeed it is wholly natural — that descriptive literature of a supreme order should have stirred him

to his own expression of a subject more powerfully than the work of an artist in his own medium which to reproduce would of necessity be to imitate. The works of such artists, like the works of nature, hindered him by continually suggesting a copyist's labour. But the works of an artist in words he could accept with rapture as fit material for reproduction by his different tools and in his different art. To look upon Michael Angelo's *Night* or Dürer's *Melancholia* doubtless must have given him profound delight and awakened in his mind a desire to express his own thought as nobly, but it can hardly have made him wish to execute a *Melancholia* or a *Night* with his similar instruments of art. The combat with the memory of the other artists' manner would have been too constant and severe, as in working from nature he found the combat with insignificant detail too wearying for the purpose of invention. But the path opens broad and smooth when a writer of equally noble poetic impulse selects and describes, moulds and colours for him a subject in which his imagination can revel at ease without even the effort of initiative. To one possessed by Blake's power of inner seeing it was comparatively simple to place upon his drawing block the visible counterpart of that scene evoked by words informed as it already is by the emotion it has stirred in him.

And even in illustrating his own poems Blake occasionally used the verbal pictures of various poets to define for him his own visions. In the British Museum copy of his *Europe* a number of marginal notes appear in his small handwriting, for the most part quotations from Milton and Shakespeare, Rowe, Dryden, and Fletcher, which help to explain, as Mr. Swinburne has noted, the marked departures from the text in the pictures. For example,

Ann Radcliffe's poem *The Pilgrim* is written out on the reverse side of the title-page, and the design following it illustrates the written poem rather than the printed text. Above the design Blake has written the title *The Assassin*, and a sketch for it appears in the Manuscript Book. On another page are gathered together this group of quotations on the subject of comets:

"He like a Comet burned
That fires the length of Ophiscus huge
In the artick skye, and from his horrid hair
Shakes Pestilence and War." MILTON.

"As the red Comet from Saturnus sent
To fright the nations with a dire portent,
With sweeping glories glides along in air
And shakes the sparkles from his blazing hair." HOMER.

"Comets imparting change to times and states
Brandish your golden tresses in the skies." SHAKESPEARE.

"Like some malignant
Planet that lowrs
Upon the world." ROWE.

The accompanying design shows a winged figure with hands clasped on the back of her head, apparently the "secret child" of the text who

Descended through the orient gates of the eternal day.

The figure descends too slowly through the clouds to represent a comet, nor is the colouring appropriate, and we should be unwary indeed if we should assume that Blake would err in either of these particulars. Apparently his use for the quotations was in this case a general one, the poem as a whole dealing with such warfare among worlds as they imply. A mere suggestion of reversion to these literary sources occurs in the lines

And Urizen unloos'd from chains
Glows like a meteor in the distant North,

on the same page with the quoted stanzas.

A drawing in which appear three horrific forms grappling in the air, clearly is explained not by the text, but by these verses written in Blake's hand upon the upper and lower margins of the page, with the headline "Storms, Tempests, etc.":

"He views with horror next the noisy cave
Where with hoarse din imprisoned tempests rave
Whose clam'rous Hurricanes attempt their flight
Or whirling in tumultuous Eddies fight.

"This orb's wide frame with the convulsion shakes,
Oft opens in the storm and often cracks.
Horror, Amazement, and Despair appear,
In all the hideous forms that mortals fear."

The text on this page seems to be quite closely connected with the comet idea, containing these lines:

Unwilling I look up to heaven! unwilling count the stars.
 Sitting in fathomless abyss of my immortal shrine,
 I seize their burning power
 And bring forth howling terrors all devouring fiery kings
 Devouring and devoured roaming on dark and desolate mountains
 In forests of eternal death, shrieking in hollow trees
 Oh mother Enitharmon!
 Stamp not with solid form this vig'rous progeny of fires.

And on page 4 occur the lines:

The horrent Demon rose, surrounded with red stars of fire,
 Whirling about in furious circles round the immortal fiend.

At the head of page 5 is written the word "War," and the design, a Satanic figure with an angel on either side, illustrates this quotation:

"O war! thou Son of Hell
 Whom angry heavens do make their minister."

It also however, illustrates, the text in a less direct manner. On pages 6 and 7 of this copy there is no printed text but the word "Famine" at the top, and underneath in pencil the one line "preparing to dress the child," followed by this stanza from Dryden:

"Famine fierce that what's denied man's use
 Even deadly plants and herbs of pois'nous juice
 Will Hunger eat — and to prolong our breath
 We greedily devour our certain death."

The design shows two figures of women and a naked child before a glowing fire, over which a pot is hung, filled presumably with "herbs of pois'nous juice." Page 7 shows a man tolling a bell and figures in front of him fainting and praying; above the design is the word "Plague," and on the lower margin these lines from Mason:

"The midnight clock has toll'd, and hark! the Bell
Of Death beats slow! — heard ye the note profound?
It pauses now, and now with rising knell
Flings to the hollow gale the sullen sound."

I have failed to find any lines in the text that correspond to either of these designs. On the lower margin of page 12 is written —

"Then to a Dungeon's depth I sent, fast bound,
Where stow'd with snakes and adders now they lodge.
The rats brush o'er their faces with their tails,
And croaking Paddocks crawl upon their limbs."

and on the upper margin of page 13 the word

"Imprisonment"

with these lines on the lower margin:

"This is all my world — I shall nothing know,
Nothing hear, but the Clock that tells my woes.
The Vine shall grow, but I shall never see it,
Summer shall come, and with her all delights,
But Dead Cold Winter still inhabit here.

The design on this page shows an imprisoned man "fast bound" with another figure — no doubt the "mighty spirit named Newton" of the text — ascending some steps leading out of the dungeon.

I have already described the concluding design, with its suggestions of conflagration and the striding spirit of revolution, as a perfectly appropriate ending to the poem, but it is interesting to note that on the upper margin of this page (page 15) Blake has written the word fire and on the lower margin these lines:

"Th' impetuous flames, with lawless power advance,
On ruddy wings the bright destruction flies
Follow'd with ruin and distressful cries,
The flaky Plague spreads swiftly with the wind,
And gastly desolation howls behind.

These instances of Blake's method in this particular book indicate his tendency to fuse and harmonize in his illustration such suggestions as will arouse a particular emotion whether these suggestions come from his own mind or the minds of others. In other words, they are a witness to his desire to illustrate an emotion rather than a verbal passage. Whatever helps to strengthen and warm his imagination he takes as so much aid toward his expression of this emotion. It is to this peculiar freedom of imagination, this sense not of irresponsibility but of responsibility to the soul rather than the body of his task, that Blake owes the spontaneity and concentration of his effect.

Mr. Arthur Symons in his recent very valuable book on Blake is deeply impressed by his use of detail and constructs from it an

ingenious argument accounting for the sense of unreality — it would be more exact to say unnaturalness — in his designs. “In Blake every detail is seen with intensity,” he says, “and with equal intensity. No one detail is subordinated to another, every inch of his surface is equally important to him; and from this unslackening emphasis come alike his arresting power and the defect which leaves us, though arrested, often unconvinced. . . . Blake was too humble toward vision to allow himself to compose or arrange what he saw, and he saw in detail, with an unparalleled fixity and clearness. Every picture of Blake, quite apart from its meaning to the intelligence, is built up in detail like a piece of decoration; and widely remote as are both intention and result, I am inclined to think he composed as Japanese artists compose, bit by bit, as he saw his picture come piece by piece before him.” The Manuscript Book enables us to decide that he did not compose in this way but in the way common to nearly all constructive artists: by determining, that is, the principal lines of his design, the division of spaces and the action of his figures. By comparing such sketches as those for the design accompanying the Argument in *Albion* and the mandrake design with the completed drawings it is clearly to be seen that Blake was not in the least too humble to compose and rearrange. Nor does it seem to me that any close examination of his work upholds Mr. Symons’s point of view with regard to his emphasis upon detail, his “passion” for it, and his “refusal to subordinate any detail for any purpose.” The illustrations comprised in the present volume, although but a small part of his accomplishment, are sufficiently varied to be fairly representative, and I do not discover in them any instance of such “unslackening emphasis” evenly

distributed. Although Blake certainly held that "as poetry admits not a letter that is insignificant, so painting admits not a grain of sand or a blade of grass insignificant — much less an insignificant blur or mark," he was far too much of an artist not to feel, if he did not state, the importance of keeping significant detail in its proper place in the composition, and while he may be said to have had in a certain sense a "passion for detail," it was not a passion so overwhelming that he did not choose altogether to omit such detail as interfered with his large impression. We have only to look at the design on page 11 of the *America*, to choose a highly characteristic example, to observe how disturbing emphatic detail would be to the effect of those long sweeping lines in which the very spirit of motion is made manifest. Everything is subordinated to the effect of flight in the upper part of the design. Half a dozen lines suggest the feathers on the great wings of the flying bird. The little figure astride his back is sufficiently articulated to seem entirely human and alive with his streaming, wind-blown hair, but the artist's touch upon him is of the lightest. The thick clouds with their effective light and shade are crossed by the forms of smaller birds — mere flecks of light or dark, and completely subordinated to the larger incidents in this vivid drama of the sky. In the lower part of the design the snake itself, vivacious, filled with energy, moving swiftly along its path and ridden by children lightly yet securely poised upon its rounded body, is by no means an inartistically prominent feature in the composition. Largely in shadow it merges with the dark of the clouds and preserves the beautiful balance of the composition. The bright accent of the moon and the sparkle of the tiny stars may claim the attention,

but not as an incongruous or importunate part of the artistic scheme; on the contrary, as an element in the interest of the whole which is recognized by every observing painter of night, adding to the picture as it does a quality of light by the side of which all other illuminations pale.

Mr. Symons makes an admirable statement of one aspect of Blake's art in the passage calling attention to the life with which Blake invests inanimate objects: "The stones with which Achan has been martyred," he says, speaking of one of Blake's coloured drawings, "live each with a separate and evil life of its own, not less vivid and violent than the clenched hands raised to hurl other stones; there is menacing gesture in the cloud of dust that rises behind them." Nothing could better describe the effect of Blake's energy of imagination exercised upon lifeless things; and if his grandeur of style in the composition of his design were not a counterbalancing factor in the general impression made by him, such energy must indeed be wearying and distracting. But I have tried to show in these untechnical notes on Blake's art that he worked in the true, and not in the pseudo, Gothic spirit and concerned himself first of all with the proportions and unity of his building before evolving its decoration. Vital and insistent in their expressiveness as are the gargoyles of Nôtre Dame, it is not of them that one first thinks in looking upon the massive structure. Thus in such a design as the title-page to the *America*, or that on page 37 of the *Jerusalem*, or the wonderful frontispiece to the *Europe*, or any of the designs reproduced from the *Songs of Experience*, it is not the half-seen trunks and foliage of the trees, the licking flames and flying birds and climbing vines and grazing sheep that give us our

greatest and instant pleasure, nor yet the individual figures of the men and women and children, sometimes beautiful as in the noble *Jerusalem* drawing, oftener contorted and grotesque; but the power and dignity of the spacious, lofty composition with its suggestions of cathedral aisles and broad horizons.

Occasionally we find a design such as that for the title-page of *The Book of Ahania* in which the element of the grotesque ceases to stimulate the imagination and becomes unpleasant, though even here the wide-flung arms and flying hair give the sensation of rapid motion, but without that dignity of environing structure upon which we have dwelt. Occasionally, too, we have such a drawing as the *David and Goliath* of the Boston Museum, in which a childlike naïveté informs the chosen types of Innocent and Ogre without æsthetic qualities adequate to support it; but these examples are not typical. The type of Blake's art to which reference continually must be made if we are to do justice to his great genius lies in such achievements as the famous illustration from his *Jerusalem* with its learned divisions and subdivisions of light and dark, its small forms of colossal significance, its prone figure, its swimming planets, its mourning angel, its dying human, its hints of pleasant landscape and fair heavens; as the frontispiece to his *Europe*, with its geometrical shapes broken into by the soft bulk of large clouds, its unearthly effect of subdued light less positive yet more potent than the sharp white of the hair and beard of the bending figure, its suggestion by means of that driven hair and beard of a great wind in empty spaces; or as the title-page to the *America*, perhaps most lovely of all Blake's illustrative designs, with its sad, drooping forms, its heavenward flying messengers, its symbol of earthly loss and

mourning, its canopy of cloud forms and the close harmony of its tender values.

Without attempting to cover the large field occupied by Blake's art in its various aspects I have wished to indicate how easily it is approached along the ordinary lines followed by the student of art, and how rewarding it is to those who apply to it the tests they would apply to Dürer, for example. If I have suggested that one source of confusion concerning it is the persistent effort to regard it as lying outside the region controlled by the laws of art, I have not been far wrong. Its great distinction, its strength and not its weakness, comes from its connection with literature and with intellectual ideas. It has in its way accomplished a union between intellect and actual vision — in other words, has made abstract ideas and emotions take on a visible aspect. The difference between such an art and one that tells a story better suited to literary expression would seem obvious enough, yet the assumption of identity between the two is the rock on which many a criticism of Blake's work has been wrecked.

Another error no doubt will spring from my own effort to trace the inspiration of certain drawings back to their literary origins. I believe one attempt already has been made — although I do not know the work to which I refer — to fix the old slur of plagiarism on Blake's poetry. It may be considered a kind of plagiarism that I have suggested in noting the dependence of the designs in *Europe* upon the descriptive writings of others. My belief is that minds of the highest originality work in this way. Their fire is fed by innumerable little flames; if it were not so they would exhaust themselves in lonely space. Be that as it may, there is no question

that Blake was intent upon his own vision and not upon that of others. His true originality lay in his independence of contradiction and was not impaired by his sensitiveness to the stimulus of other thinkers like minded with himself.

CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE

and has been used as a curriculum of
study in the last few years of the century.
The book is a study of the structure of the
book.



By Courtesy of W. A. White, Esq.

DESIGN FOR "FIRE"

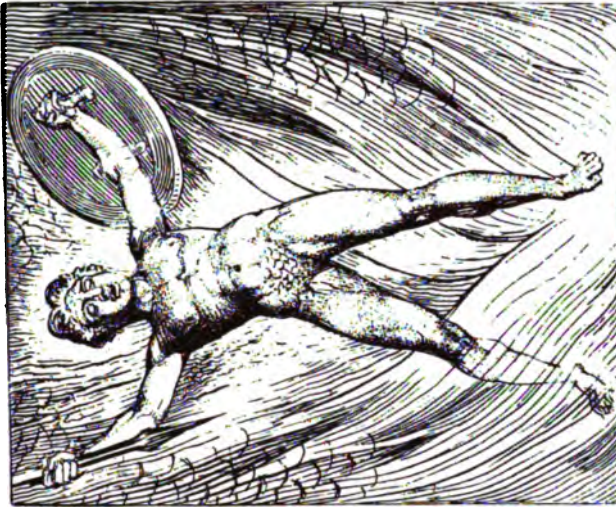
From the Manuscript Book: Page 91





*I found him beneath a Tree
 Plucking of My Apples by W.B.L.*

FROM THE GATES OF PARADISE
 (Octavo Ed.)



*Fire that end on endless Wind
 Plucking of My Apples by W.B.L.*

"FIRE" FROM THE GATES OF PARADISE
 (Octavo Ed.)

III

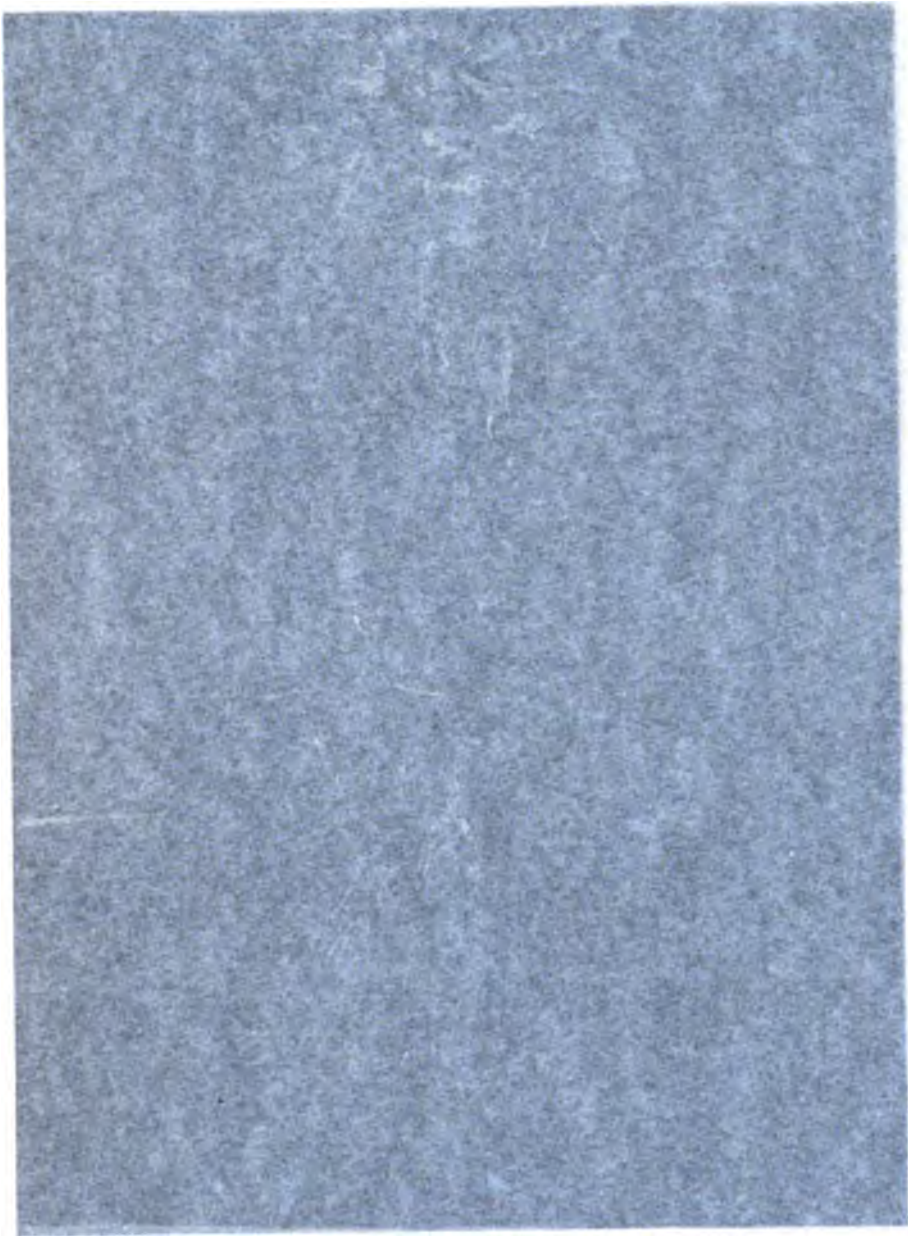
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99. 99. 99.
100. 100. 100.

1891, Dec. 10. 1891, Dec. 10. 1891, Dec. 10.

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THE CRUCIFIXION
From Jerusalem: Page 56

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A DRAWING
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THE LITTLE BLACK BOY
From the Songs of Innocence: Page 10

VII





THE LAUGHING BOY

From Page 2 of Songs of Innocence and Experience

VIII



SONS OF EXPERIENCE.



The CLOD & the PEBBLE

*Love 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,
Trod upon 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:
Tosses in another's fate of ease,
And builds a Hell in Heaven's despite.*





SONGS OF INNOCENCE, THE FIRST BOOK

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SONGS OF INNOCENCE: TITLE PAGE



JOHN HENRY PAGE, GOVERNOR
AND EX-CHIEF OF THE
M.



JOINT TITLE PAGE OF SONGS OF INNOCENCE
AND EXPERIENCE



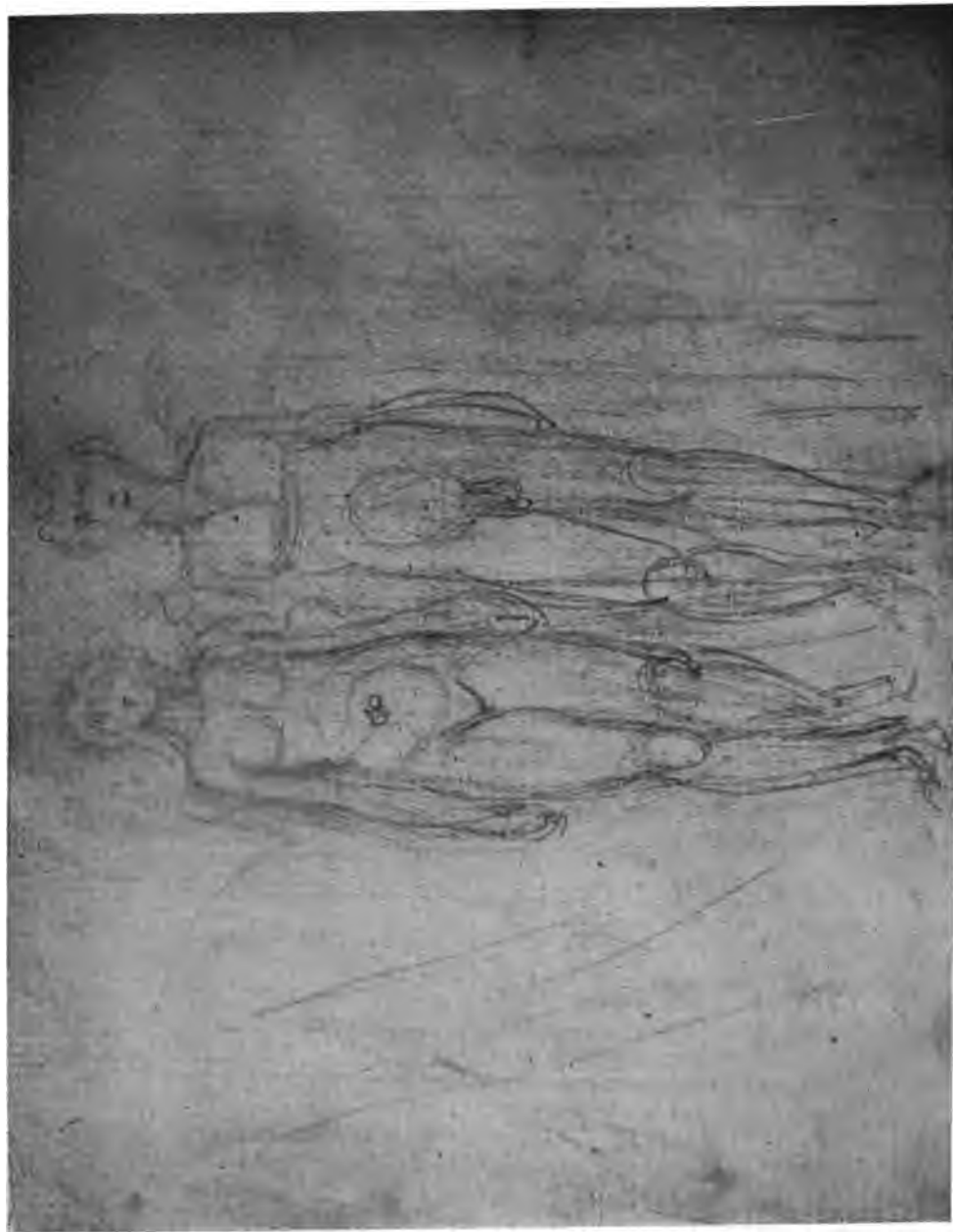
SHE SHALL BE CALLED WOODS
From Original in the Metropolitan Museum of Art

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SHE SHALL BE CALLED WOMAN
From Original in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

XII



By Courtesy W. A. White, Esq.

SKETCH FOR ADAM AND EVE
From the Manuscript Sketch Book: Page 102

XIII



TITLE PAGE OF THE BOOK OF ESTHER



TITLE PAGE OF THE BOOK OF THEL
XIV



Why should the mistrefs of the vales of Har, utter a sigh.
She ceas'd & smild in tears, then sat down in her silver shrine.

Thel answerd, O thou little virgin of the peaceful valley,
Giving to those that cannot crave, the voiceless, the desired:
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 meekish mouth from all contagious taints,
Thy wine doth purify the golden honey, thy perfume,
Which thou dost scatter on every little blade of grass that springs,
Revives the milked ewe, & 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 Lilly answerd, ask the tender cloud,
And it shall tell thee why it glitters in the morning sky,
And why it scatters its bright beads thro' the humid air.
Descend O little cloud & hover before the eyes of Thel.

The Cloud descended, and the Lilly bow'd her modest head;
And went to mind her numerous charge among the verdant grass.





The Argument

*I loved Theetormen
And I was not ashamed
I trampled in my virgin tears
And I hid in Leuthas vale!*

*I plucked Leuthas flower,
And I rose up from the vale;
But the terrible thunders tore
My virgin mantle in twain.*



ALBION: THE ARGUMENT

XVII



JOSEPH
Among the Rocks



JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA
Among the Rocks of Albion (*early engraving*)

XVIII



THE SPARROW
from *Parrots and other* (1911)

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THE ANCIENT OF DAYS

From *Europe*: Blake's portrayal of Jehovah measuring the earth with His compass

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FAMINE
(The Boston Museum of Fine Arts)
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PERSISTENCE OF THE DEER
AND THE MOUNTAIN
XIII



PESTILENCE — THE DEATH OF THE FIRST-BORN
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THE KING OF THE
CITY OF THE VICTORY



THE KING OF BABYLON IN HELL
(The Boston Museum of Fine Arts)

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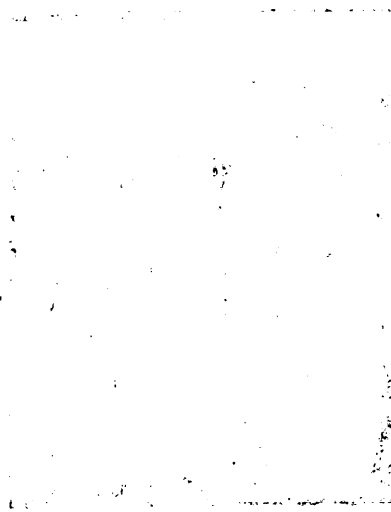
THE TEMPLEAION OF ...
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THE TEMPTATION OF EVE
(The Boston Museum of Fine Arts)

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ILLUSTRATIONS TO THE
 (1) BODILY AND MENTAL
 AND



ILLUSTRATIONS TO MILTON'S *COMUS*
(The Boston Museum of Fine Arts)

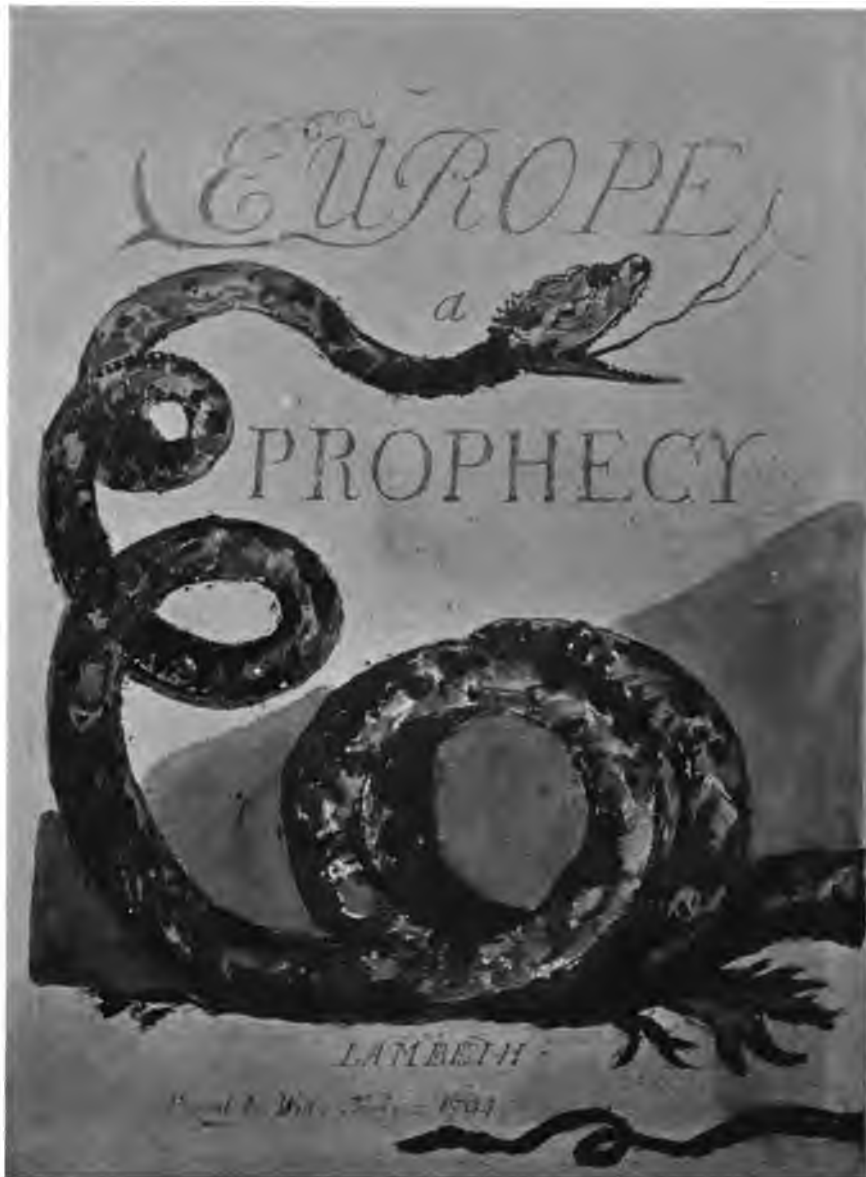




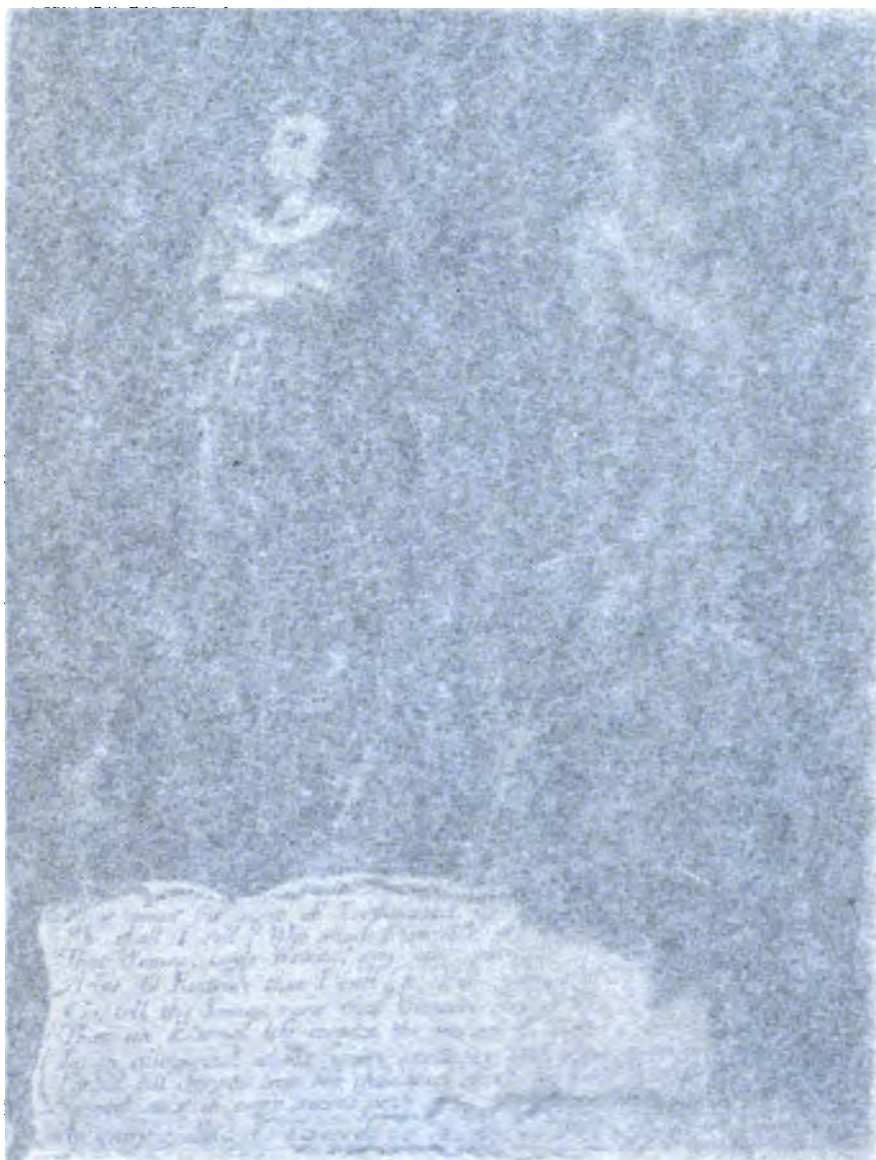
THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT
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TITLE PAGE OF EUROPE: A PROPHECY
XXVII



EL ROY, P. M. C. P. C.

1911



EUROPE: PAGE FIVE

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EUROPE: PAGE SEVEN

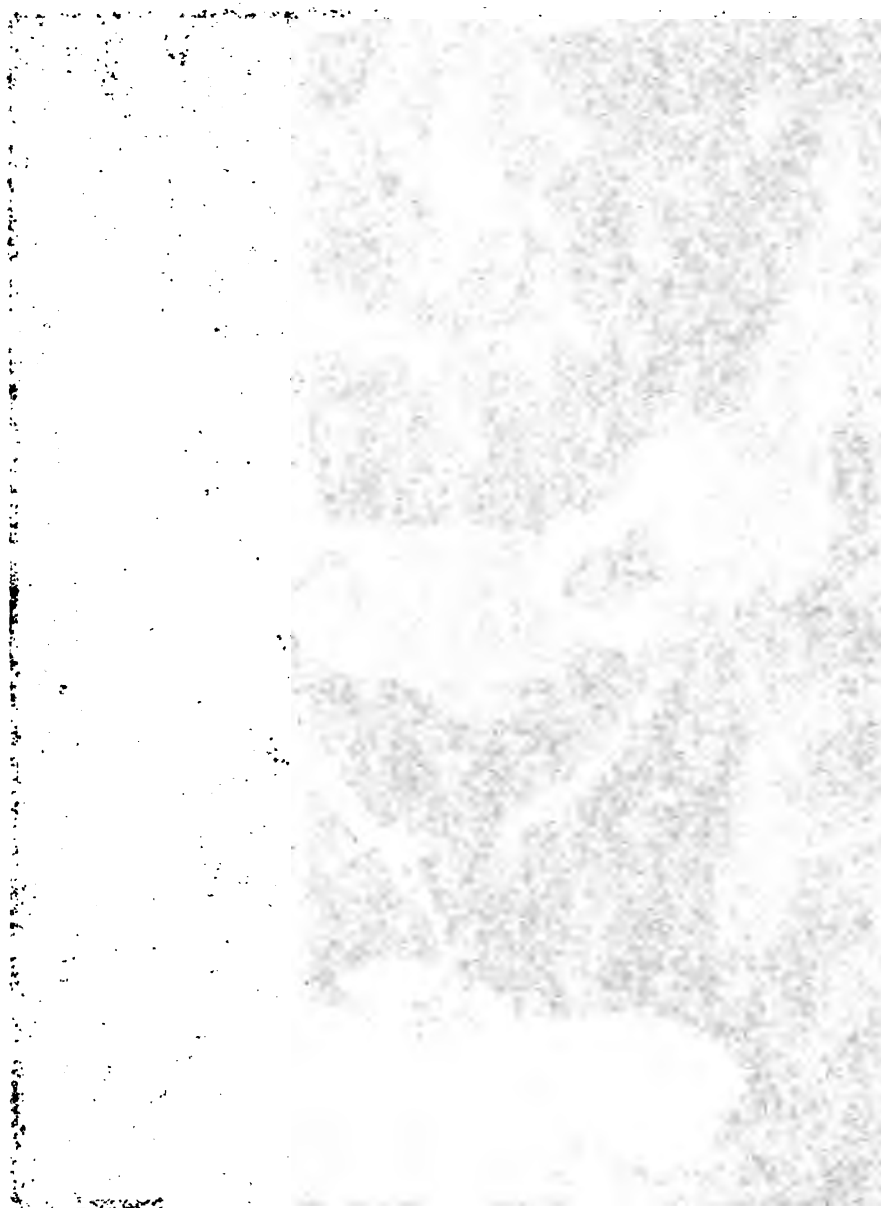
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EUROPE: PAGE NINE

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*Albion's Angel rose upon the Shore of Night,
He saw Urizen on the Atlantic;
And his brazen Book
That Kings & Priests had copied on Earth
Expanded from North to South.*

EUROPE: PAGE TEN

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TITLE PAGE OF AMERICA: A PROPHECY

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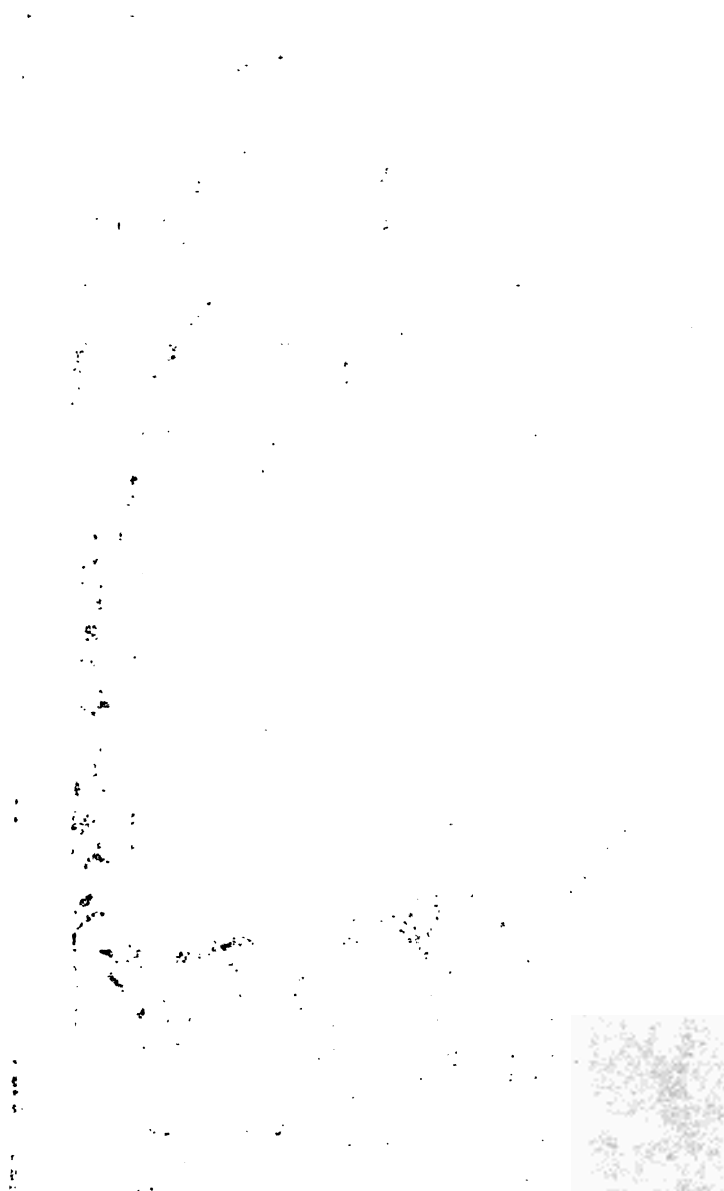
FRONTISPICE OF AMERICA: A F. 1891.
(From colored copy)

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FRONTISPIECE OF AMERICA: A PROPHECY
(*From coloured copy*)

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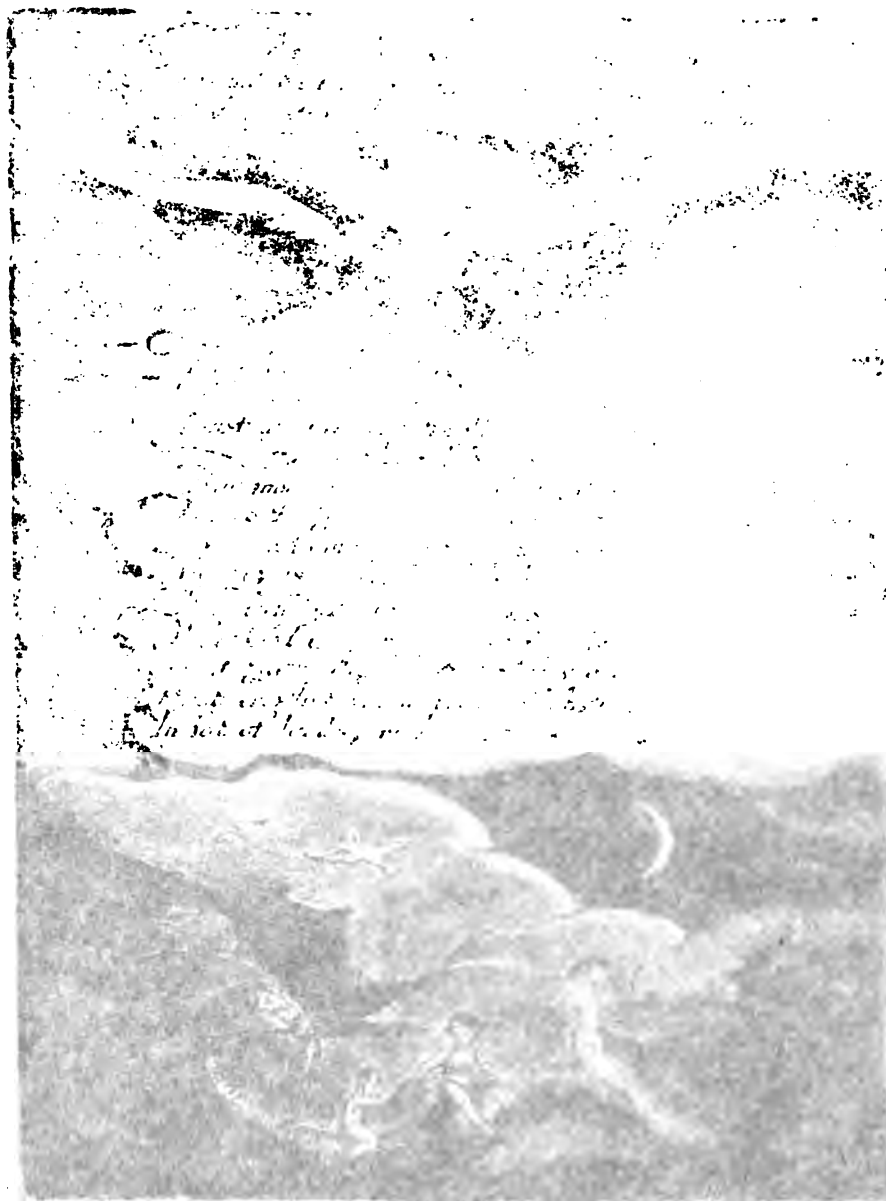


AMERICA
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AMERICA: PAGE SEVEN
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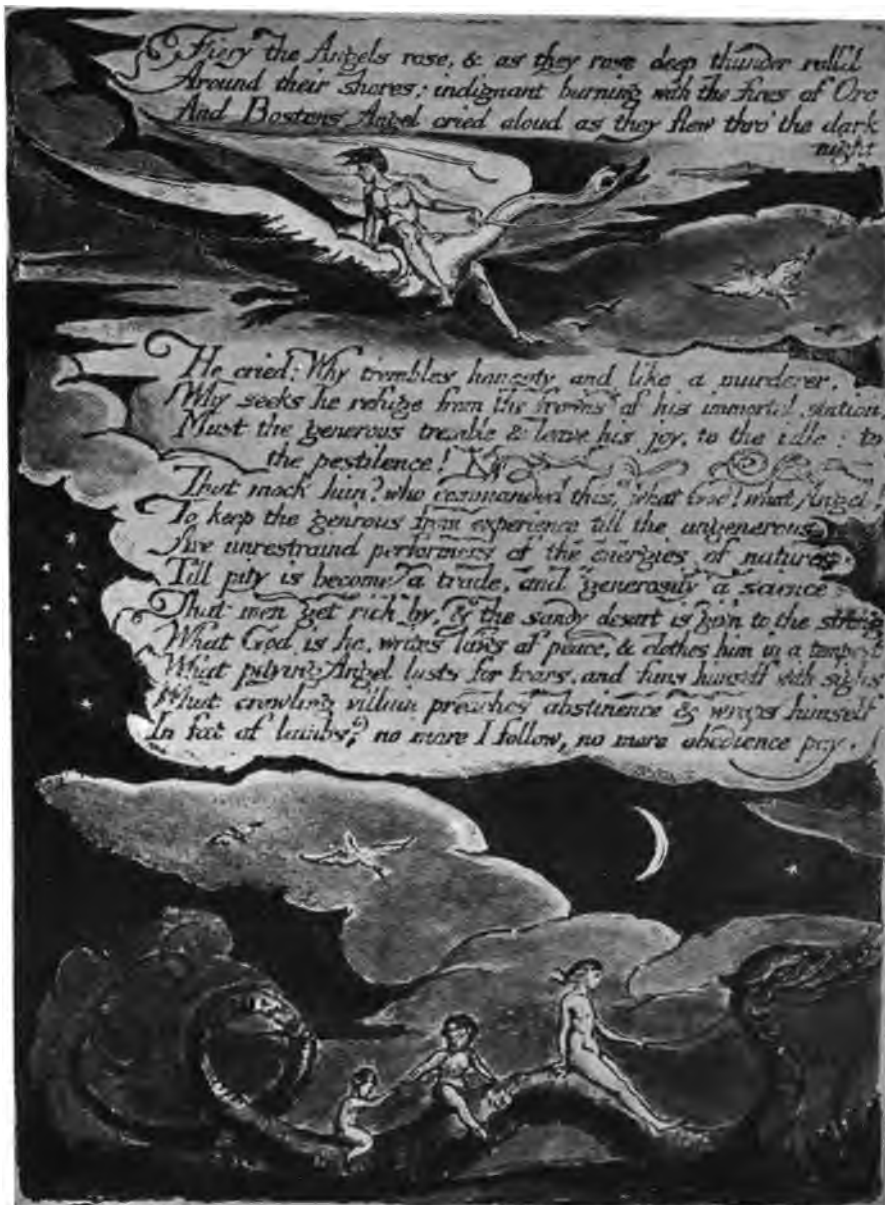
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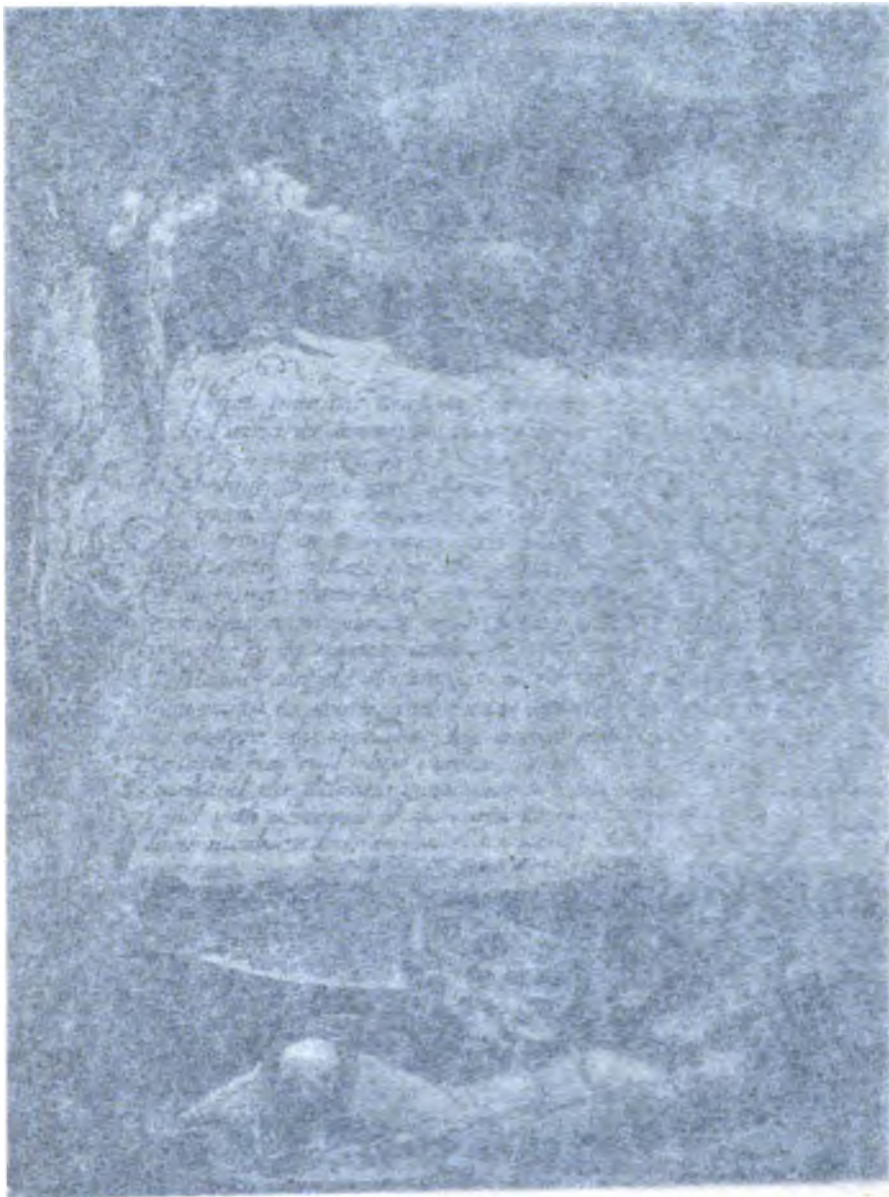
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AMERICAN

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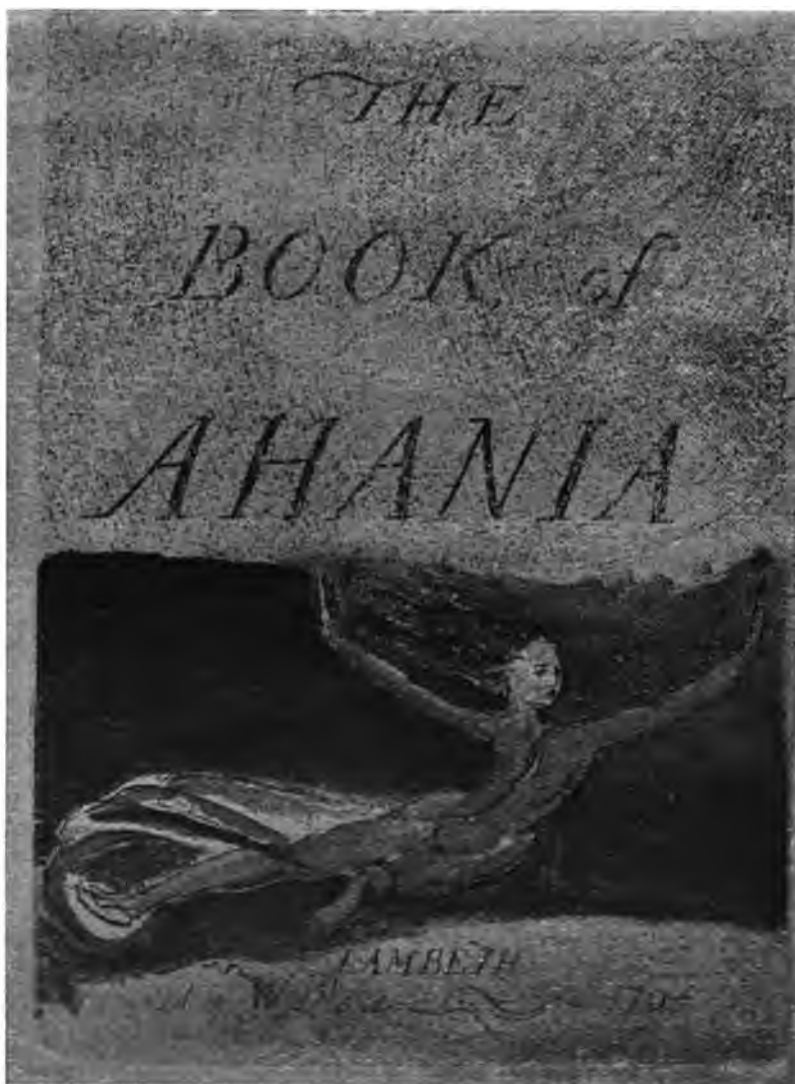


AMERICA: PAGE THIRTEEN
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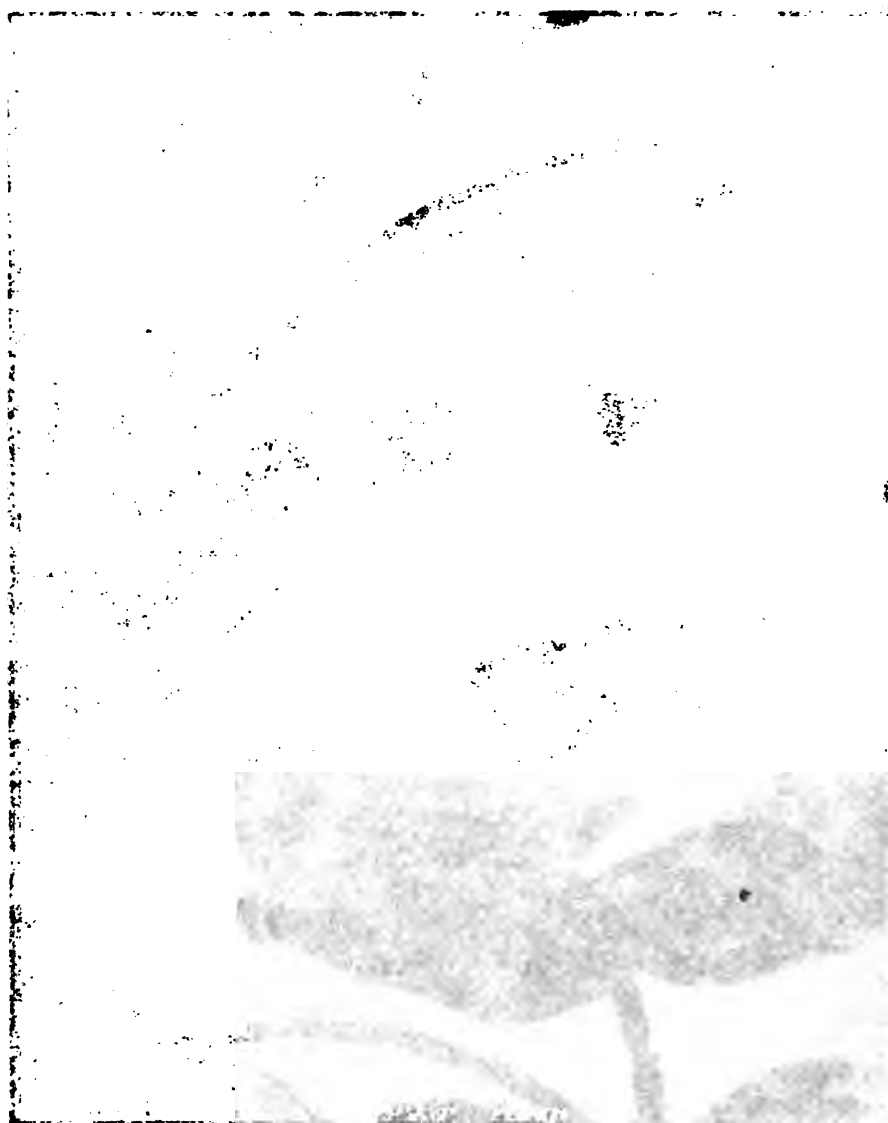
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Excerpt by W. A. W. B. F. 2

THE MANUSCRIPT OF THE

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By Courtesy W. A. White, Esq.

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For Courtesy W. A. White, Esq.

THE MANUSCRIPT SKETCHES

AND



By Courtesy W. A. White, Esq.

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Sketch for Nebuchadnezzar

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MARRIAGE OF



MARRIAGE OF HEAVEN AND HELL: PAGE TWENTY-TWO

Nebuchadnezzar

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THE MONASTERY
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THE WOMAN TAKEN IN ADULTERY
(The Boston Museum of Fine Arts)

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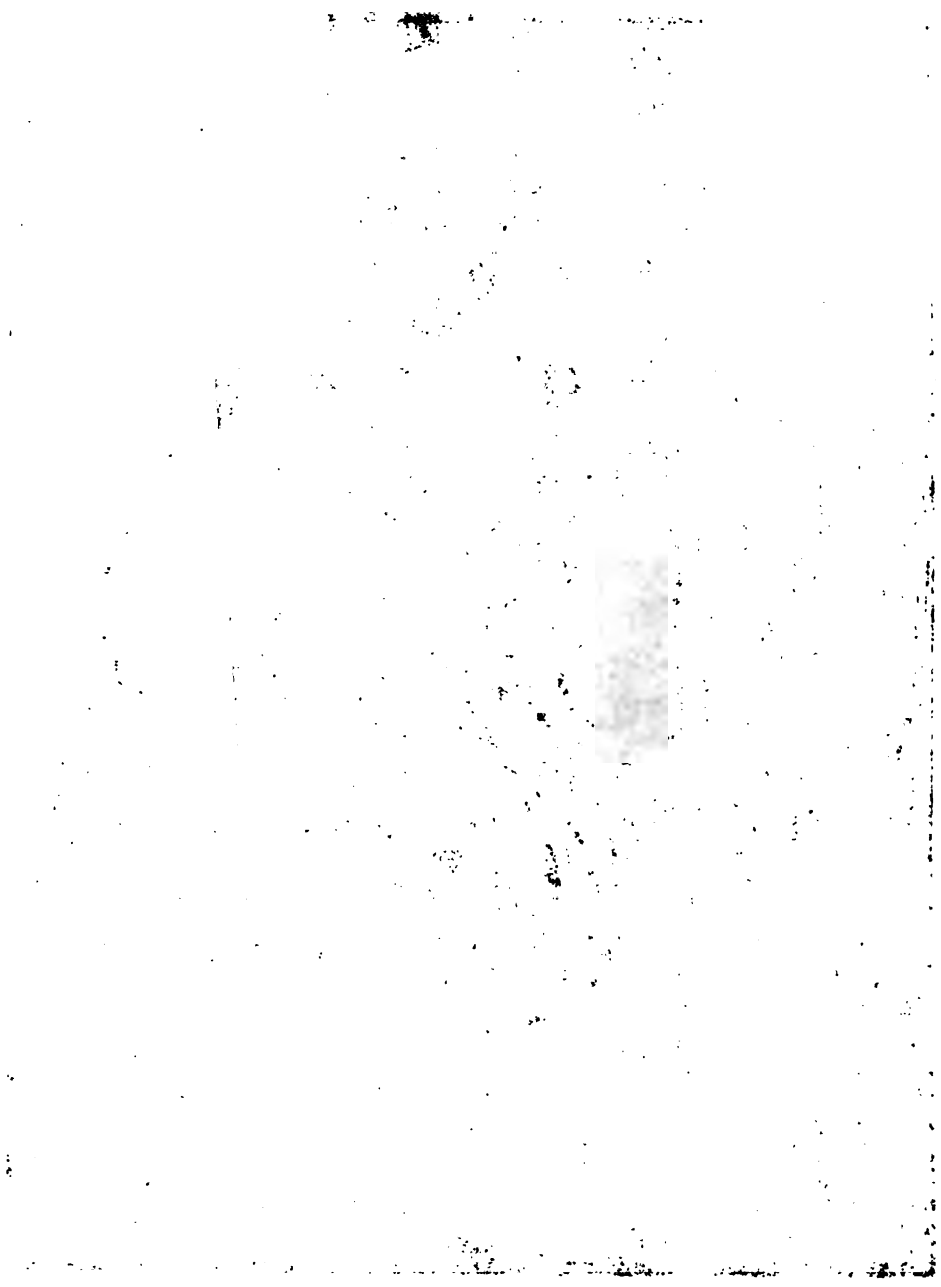


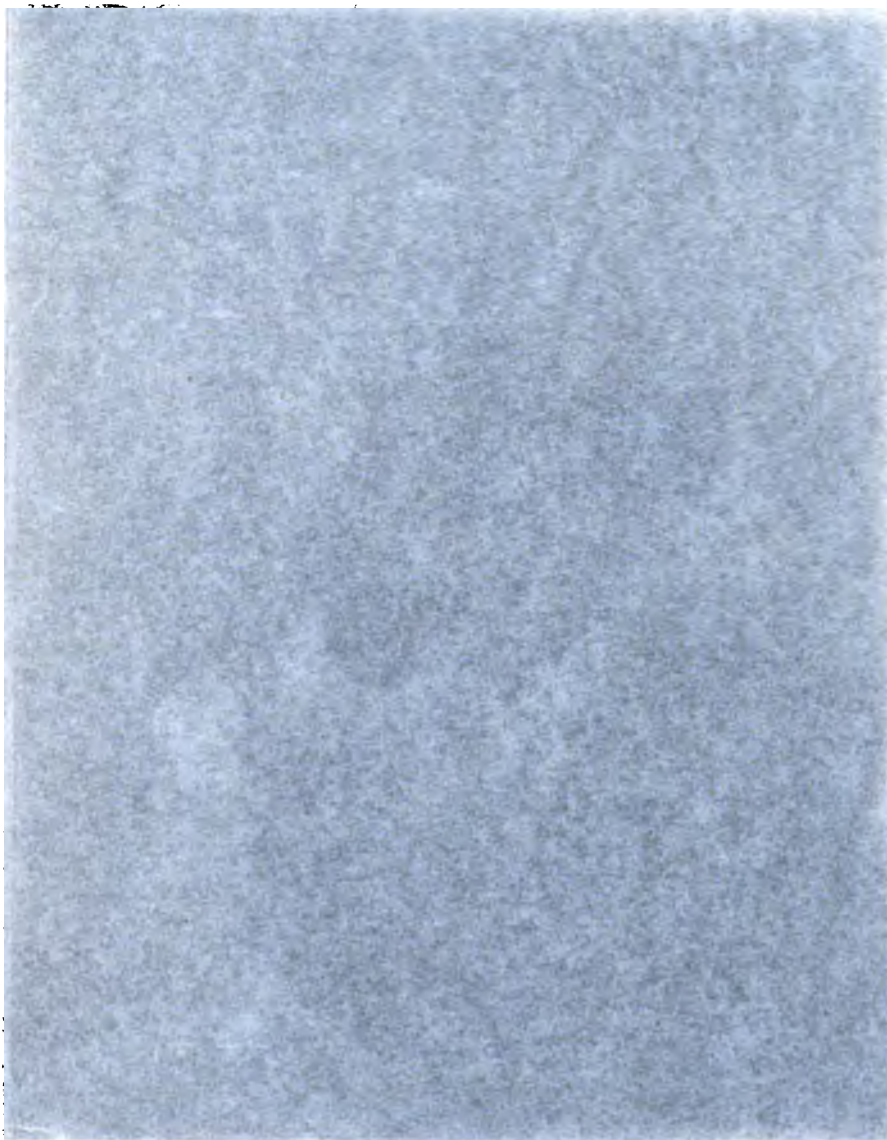
ILLUSTRATION TO PART I, CHAPTER A

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ABRAHAM PREPARING TO SACRIFICE ISAAC
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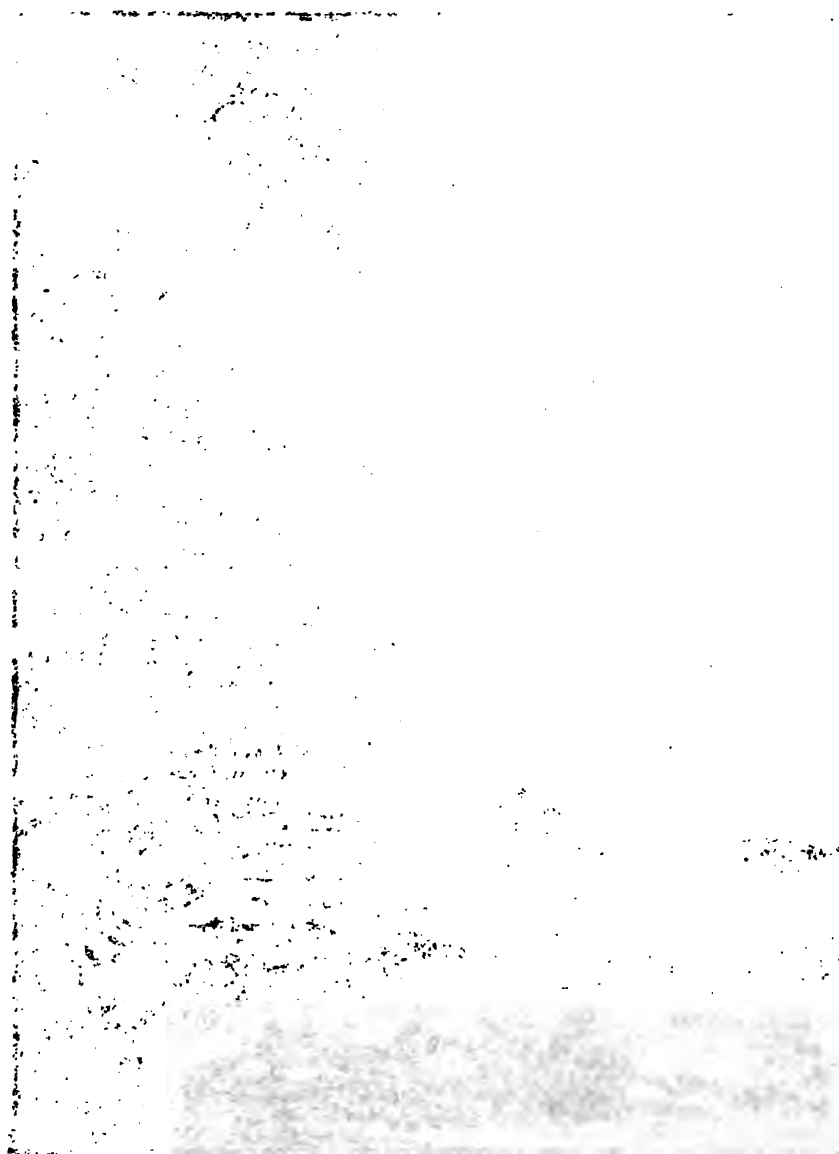
By Courtesy of Mrs. Payne Whitney

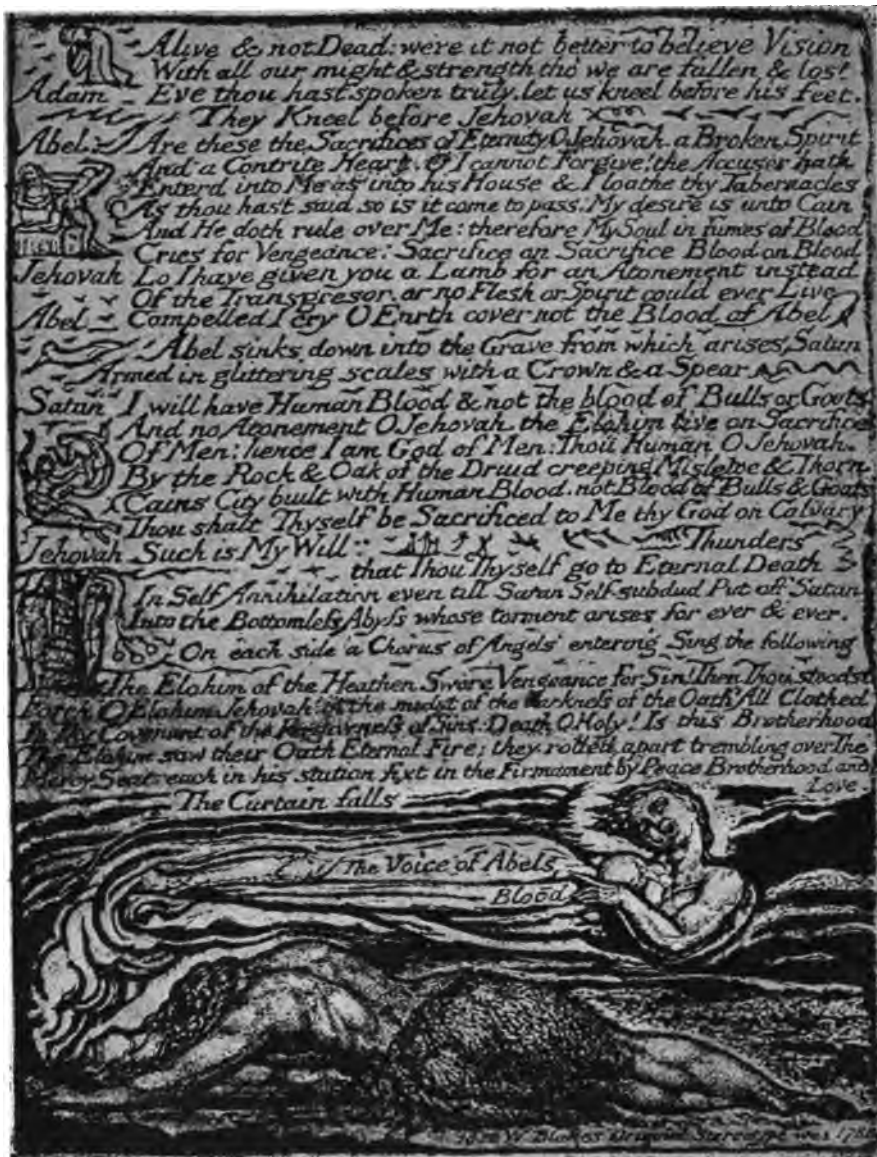
THE GOOD AND EVIL ANGELS
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MOSES ERECTING THE BRAZEN SERPENT
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