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1. William Blake (1757–1827)

Selected Poetical Works

POEMS FROM POETICAL SKETCHES*
(1783)

To Spring

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

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

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

10

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

To Summer

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

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

10

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

To Autumn

O Autumn, laden with fruit, and stained
 With the blood of the grape, pass not, but sit
 Beneath my shady roof; there thou mayst rest
 And tune thy jolly voice to my fresh pipe,
 And all the daughters of the year shall dance!
 Sing now the lusty song of fruits and flowers.

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

10

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

To Winter

O Winter, bar thine adamantine doors!
 The north is thine; there hast thou built thy dark
 Deep-founded habitation. Shake not thy roofs,
 Nor bend thy pillars with thine iron car.

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

Lo! Now the direful monster, whose skin clings
 To his strong bones, strides o'er the groaning rocks: 10
 He withers all in silence, and his hand*
 Unclothes the earth, and freezes up frail life.

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

To the Evening Star

Thou fair-haired angel of the evening,
 Now, whilst the sun rests on the mountains, light
 Thy bright torch of love – thy radiant crown
 Put on, and smile upon our evening bed!
 Smile on our loves, and, while thou drawest the
 Blue curtains of the sky, scatter thy silver dew
 On every flower that shuts its sweet eyes
 In timely sleep. Let thy west wind sleep on
 The lake; speak silence with thy glimmering eyes,
 And wash the dusk with silver. Soon, full soon, 10
 Dost thou withdraw; then the wolf rages wide,
 And the lion glares thro' the dun forest.
 The fleeces of our flocks are covered with
 Thy sacred dew: protect them with thine influence.

To Morning

O holy virgin, clad in purest white,
 Unlock heaven's golden gates and issue forth!
 Awake the dawn that sleeps in heaven; let light
 Rise from the chambers of the east, and bring
 The honeyed dew that cometh on waking day.
 O radiant Morning, salute the sun,
 Roused like a huntsman to the chase, and with
 Thy buskined feet appear upon our hills.

Fair Elenor

The bell struck one and shook the silent tower;
 The graves give up their dead: fair Elenor
 Walked by the castle gate, and looked in:
 A hollow groan ran thro' the dreary vaults.

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

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

10

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

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

20

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

“Take this,” he cried, and thrust into her arms
 A wet napkin, wrapped about, then rushed
 Past, howling: she received into her arms
 Pale Death, and followed on the wings of fear.

They passed swift thro’ the outer gate; the wretch,
 Howling, leaped o’er the wall into the moat, 30
 Stifling in mud. Fair Ellen passed the bridge,
 And heard a gloomy voice cry, “Is it done?”

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

Her maids await her; on her bed she falls –
 That bed of joy where erst her lord hath pressed.
 “Ah, woman’s fear!” she cried. “Ah, cursed duke!
 Ah, my dear lord! Ah, wretched Elenor! 40

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

“My lord was like a star in highest heaven
 Drawn down to earth by spells and wickedness;
 My lord was like the opening eyes of day
 When western winds creep softly o’er the flowers.

“But he is darkened – like the summer’s noon
 Clouded; fall’n like the stately tree, cut down; 50
 The breath of heaven dwelt among his leaves.
 Oh, Elenor, weak woman, filled with woe!”

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

Her eyes were fixed; the bloody cloth unfolds,
 Disclosing to her sight the murdered head
 Of her dear lord, all ghastly pale, clotted
 With gory blood; it groaned, and thus it spake: 60

“O Elenor, behold thy husband’s head,*
 Who, sleeping on the stones of yonder tower,
 Was reft of life by the accursed duke!
 A hired villain turned my sleep to death!

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

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

70

Song

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

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

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

10

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

Song

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

His face is fair as heaven
When springing buds unfold;
Oh, why to him wast given,
Whose heart is wintry cold?
His breast is love's all-worshipped tomb,
Where all love's pilgrims come.

10

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

Song

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

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

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

10

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

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

20

Song

I love the jocund dance,
 The softly breathing song,
 Where innocent eyes do glance,
 And where lisps the maiden's tongue.

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

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

10

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

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

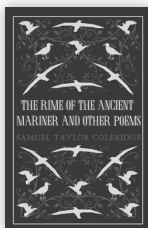
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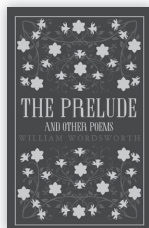
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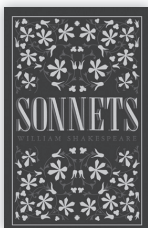
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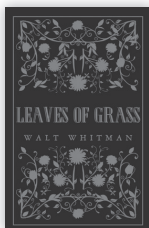
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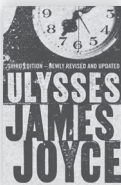
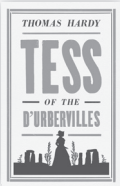
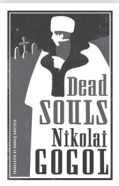
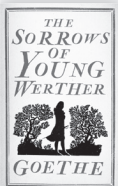
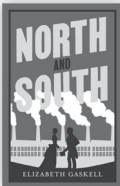
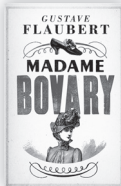
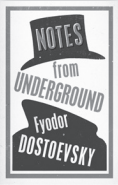
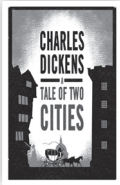
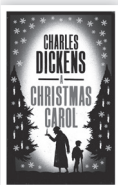
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