

POEMS FROM THE ROSSETTI MANUSCRIPT PART I

William Blake

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POEMS FROM THE ROSSETTI MANUSCRIPT PART I

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Never seek to tell thy Love

Never seek to tell thy love,
Love that never told can be;
For the gentle wind does move
Silently, invisibly.

I told my love, I told my love,
I told her all my heart;
Trembling, cold, in ghastly fears,
Ah! she doth depart.

Soon as she was gone from me,
A traveller came by,
Silently, invisibly:
He took her with a sigh.

I laid me down upon a Bank

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

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

I saw a Chapel all of Gold

I saw a Chapel all of gold
That none did dare to enter in,
And many weeping stood without,
Weeping, mourning, worshipping.

I saw a Serpent rise between
The white pillars of the door,
And he forc'd and forc'd and forc'd;
Down the golden hinges tore,

And along the pavement sweet,
Set with pearls and rubies bright,
All his shining length he drew,
Till upon the altar white

Vomiting his poison out
On the Bread and on the Wine.
So I turn'd into a sty,
And laid me down among the swine.

I asked a Thief

I askèd a thief to steal me a peach:
He turnèd up his eyes.
I ask'd a lithe lady to lie her down:
Holy and meek, she cries.

As soon as I went
An Angel came:
He wink'd at the thief,
And smil'd at the dame;

And without one word said
Had a peach from the tree,
And still as a maid
Enjoy'd the lady.

I laid me down upon a Bank

I heard an Angel singing

I heard an Angel singing
When the day was springing:
'Mercy, Pity, Peace
Is the world's release.'

Thus he sang all day
Over the new-mown hay,
Till the sun went down,
And haycocks lookèd brown.

I heard a Devil curse
Over the heath and the furze:
'Mercy could be no more
If there was nobody poor,

'And Pity no more could be,
If all were as happy as we.'
At his curse the sun went down,
And the heavens gave a frown.

Down pour'd the heavy rain
Over the new reap'd grain;
And Misery's increase
Is Mercy, Pity, Peace.

A Cradle Song

Sleep! sleep! beauty bright,
Dreaming o'er the joys of night;
Sleep! sleep! in thy sleep
Little sorrows sit and weep.

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

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

O! the cunning wiles that creep
In thy little heart asleep.
When thy little heart does wake
Then the dreadful lightnings break,

From thy cheek and from thy eye,
O'er the youthful harvests nigh.
Infant wiles and infant smiles
Heaven and Earth of peace beguiles.

Silent, silent Night

Silent, silent Night,
Quench the holy light
Of thy torches bright;

For possess'd of Day,
Thousand spirits stray
That sweet joys betray.

Why should joys be sweet
Usèd with deceit,
Nor with sorrows meet?

But an honest joy
Does itself destroy
For a harlot coy.

I fear'd the fury of my wind

I fear'd the fury of my wind
Would blight all blossoms fair and true;
And my sun it shin'd and shin'd,
And my wind it never blew.

But a blossom fair or true
Was not found on any tree;
For all blossoms grew and grew
Fruitless, false, tho' fair to see.

Infant Sorrow

i

My mother groan'd, my father wept;
Into the dangerous world I leapt,
Helpless, naked, piping loud,
Like a fiend hid in a cloud.

ii

Struggling in my father's hands,
Striving against my swaddling-bands,
Bound and weary, I thought best

Silent, silent Night

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To sulk upon my mother's breast.

iii

When I saw that rage was vain,
And to sulk would nothing gain,
Turning many a trick and wile
I began to soothe and smile.

iv

And I sooth'd day after day,
Till upon the ground I stray;
And I smil'd night after night,
Seeking only for delight.

v

And I saw before me shine
Clusters of the wand'ring vine;
And, beyond, a Myrtle-tree
Stretch'd its blossoms out to me.

vi

But a Priest with holy look,
In his hands a holy book,
Pronouncèd curses on his head
Who the fruits or blossoms shed.

vii

I beheld the Priest by night;
He embrac'd my Myrtle bright:
I beheld the Priest by day,
Where beneath my vines he lay.

viii

Like a serpent in the day
Underneath my vines he lay:
Like a serpent in the night
He embrac'd my Myrtle bright.

ix

So I smote him, and his gore
Stain'd the roots my Myrtle bore;
But the time of youth is fled,
And grey hairs are on my head.

Silent, silent Night

Why should I care for the men of Thames

Why should I care for the men of Thames,
Or the cheating waves of charter'd streams;
Or shrink at the little blasts of fear
That the hireling blows into my ear?

Tho' born on the cheating banks of Thames,
Tho' his waters bathèd my infant limbs,
The Ohio shall wash his stains from me:
I was born a slave, but I go to be free!

Thou has a lap full of seed

Thou hast a lap full of seed,
And this is a fine country.
Why dost thou not cast thy seed,
And live in it merrily.

Shall I cast it on the sand
And turn it into fruitful land?
For on no other ground
Can I sow my seed,
Without tearing up
Some stinking weed.

In a Myrtle Shade

Why should I be bound to thee,
O my lovely Myrtle-tree?
Love, free Love, cannot be bound
To any tree that grows on ground.

O! how sick and weary I
Underneath my Myrtle lie;
Like to dung upon the ground,
Underneath my Myrtle bound.

Oft my Myrtle sigh'd in vain
To behold my heavy chain:
Oft my Father saw us sigh,
And laugh'd at our simplicity.

So I smote him, and his gore
Stain'd the roots my Myrtle bore.
But the time of youth is fled,
And grey hairs are on my head.

To my Myrtle

To a lovely Myrtle bound,
Blossoms show'ring all around,
O how sick and weary I
Underneath my Myrtle lie!
Why should I be bound to thee,
O my lovely Myrtle—tree?

To Nobodaddy

Why art thou silent and invisible,
Father of Jealousy?
Why dost thou hide thyself in clouds
From every searching eye?

Why darkness and obscurity
In all thy words and laws,
That none dare eat the fruit but from
The wily Serpent's jaws?
Or is it because secrecy gains females' loud applause?

Are not the joys of morning sweeter

Are not the joys of morning sweeter
Than the joys of night?
And are the vigorous joys of youth
Ashamed of the light?

Let age and sickness silent rob
The vineyards in the night;
But those who burn with vigorous youth
Pluck fruits before the light.

The Wild Flower's Song

As I wander'd the forest,
The green leaves among,
I heard a Wild Flower
Singing a song.

'I slept in the earth
In the silent night,
I murmur'd my fears
And I felt delight.

'In the morning I went,
As rosy as morn,
To seek for new joy;
But I met with scorn.'

To my Myrtle

Day

The sun arises in the East,
Cloth'd in robes of blood and gold;
Swords and spears and wrath increas'd
All around his bosom roll'd,
Crown'd with warlike fires and raging desires.

The Fairy

'Come hither, my Sparrows,
My little arrows.
If a tear or a smile
Will a man beguile,
If an amorous delay
Clouds a sunshiny day,
If the step of a foot
Smites the heart to its root,
'Tis the marriage-ring
Makes each fairy a king.'

So a Fairy sung.
From the leaves I sprung;
He leap'd from the spray
To flee away;
But in my hat caught,
He soon shall be taught.
Let him laugh, let him cry,
He's my Butterfly;
For I've pull'd out the sting
Of the marriage-ring.

Motto to the Songs of Innocence and of Experience

The Good are attracted by men's perceptions,
And think not for themselves;
Till Experience teaches them to catch
And to cage the fairies and elves.

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

Lafayette

i

'Let the brothels of Paris be openèd

With many an alluring dance,
To awake the physicians thro' the city!
Said the beautiful Queen of France.

ii

The King awoke on his couch of gold,
As soon as he heard these tidings told:
'Arise and come, both fife and drum,
And the famine shall eat both crust and crumb.'

iii

The Queen of France just touch'd this globe,
And the pestilence darted from her robe;
But our good Queen quite grows to the ground,
And a great many suckers grow all around.

iv

Fayette beside King Lewis stood;
He saw him sign his hand;
And soon he saw the famine rage
About the fruitful land.

Fayette beheld the Queen to smile
And wink her lovely eye;
And soon he saw the pestilence
From street to street to fly.

vi

Fayette beheld the King and Queen
In curses and iron bound;
But mute Fayette wept tear for tear,
And guarded them around.

vii

Fayette, Fayette, thou'rt bought and sold
And sold is thy happy morrow;
Thou gavest the tears of pity away
In exchange for the tears of sorrow.

viii

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Who will exchange his own fireside
For the stone of another's door?
Who will exchange his wheaten loaf
For the links of a dungeon–floor?

ix

O who would smile on the wintry seas
And pity the stormy roar?
Or who will exchange his new–born child
For the dog at the wintry door?