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*SONGS OF
INNOCENCE & EXPERIENCE*

Songs of
Innocence and Experience

WILLIAM BLAKE



1938

Chatto and Windus

LONDON

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SONGS OF INNOCENCE

INTRODUCTION

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

“Pipe a song about a Lamb!”
So I piped with merry cheer.
“Piper, pipe that song again;”
So I piped: he wept to hear.

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

“Piper, sit thee down and write
In a book, that all may read.”
So he vanish’d from my sight,
And I pluck’d a hollow reed

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

WILLIAM BLAKE

THE ECHOING GREEN

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

Old John, with white hair,
Does laugh away care,
Sitting under the oak,
Among the old folk.
They laugh at our play,
And soon they all say:
"Such, such were the joys
When we all, girls and boys,
In our youth-time were seen
On the Echoing Green."

Till the little ones, weary,
No more can be merry;
The sun does descend,
And our sports have an end.
Round the laps of their mothers
Many sisters and brothers,

S O N G S O F I N N O C E N C E

Like birds in their nest,
Are ready for rest;
And sport no more seen
On the darkening Green.

W I L L I A M B L A K E

THE LAMB

LITTLE Lamb, who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee?
Gave thee life, and bid thee feed,
By the stream and o'er the mead;
Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest clothing, woolly, bright;
Gave thee such a tender voice,
Making all the vales rejoice?
Little Lamb, who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee?

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

S O N G S O F I N N O C E N C E

THE SHEPHERD

How sweet is the shepherd's sweet lot!

From the morn to the evening he strays;

He shall follow his sheep all the day,

And his tongue shall be fillèd with praise.

For he hears the lamb's innocent call,

And he hears the ewe's tender reply;

He is watchful while they are in peace,

For they know when their shepherd is nigh.

W I L L I A M B L A K E

INFANT JOY

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

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

SONGS OF INNOCENCE

THE LITTLE BLACK BOY

My mother bore me in the southern wild,
And I am black, but O my soul is white;
White as an angel is the English child,
But I am black, as if bereav'd of light.

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

"Look, on the rising sun, there God does live,
And gives His light, and gives His heat away;
And flowers and trees and beasts and men receive
Comfort in morning, joy in the noonday.

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

"For when our souls have learn'd the heat to bear,
The clouds will vanish, we shall hear His voice,
Saying: 'Come out from the grove, My love and care,
And round My golden tent like lambs rejoice.'"

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

W I L L I A M B L A K E

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

SONGS OF INNOCENCE

LAUGHING SONG

WHEN the green woods laugh with the voice of joy,
And the dimpling stream runs laughing by;
When the air does laugh with our merry wit,
And the green hill laughs with the noise of it;

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

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

WILLIAM BLAKE

SPRING

SOUND the flute!
Now it's mute.
Birds delight
Day and night;
Nightingale
In the dale,
Lark in sky,
Merrily,

Merrily, merrily, to welcome in the year.

Little boy,
Full of joy;
Little girl,
Sweet and small;
Cock does crow,
So do you;
Merry voice,
Infant noise,

Merrily, merrily, to welcome in the year.

Little lamb,
Here I am;
Come and lick
My white neck;
Let me pull
Your soft wool;
Let me kiss
Your soft face:

Merrily, merrily, we welcome in the year.

SONGS OF INNOCENCE

A CRADLE SONG

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

Sweet sleep, with soft down
Weave thy brows an infant crown.
Sweet sleep, Angel mild,
Hover o'er my happy child.

Sweet smiles, in the night
Hover over my delight;
Sweet smiles, Mother's smiles,
All the livelong night beguiles.

Sweet moans, dovelike sighs,
Chase not slumber from thy eyes.
Sweet moans, sweeter smiles,
All the dovelike moans beguiles.

Sleep, sleep, happy child,
All creation slept and smil'd;
Sleep, sleep, happy sleep,
While o'er thee thy mother weep.

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

W I L L I A M B L A K E

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

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

SONGS OF INNOCENCE

NURSE'S SONG

WHEN the voices of children are heard on the green,
And laughing is heard on the hill,
My heart is at rest within my breast,
And everything else is still.

"Then come home, my children, the sun is gone down,
And the dews of night arise;
Come, come, leave off play, and let us away,
Till the morning appears in the skies."

"No, no, let us play, for it is yet day,
And we cannot go to sleep;
Besides, in the sky the little birds fly,
And the hills are all cover'd with sheep."

"Well, well, go and play, till the light fades away,
And then go home to bed."
The little ones leapèd and shoutèd and laugh'd
And all the hills echoèd.

W I L L I A M B L A K E

HOLY THURSDAY

'Twas on a Holy Thursday, their innocent faces clean,
The children walking two and two, in red and blue and
green;
Grey-headed beadles walk'd before, with wands as white
as snow,
Till into the high dome of Paul's they like Thames'
waters flow.

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

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

SONGS OF INNOCENCE

THE BLOSSOM

MERRY, merry Sparrow!
Under leaves so green,
A happy Blossom
Sees you, swift as arrow,
Seek your cradle narrow
Near my Bosom.

Pretty, pretty Robin!
Under leaves so green,
A happy Blossom
Hears you sobbing, sobbing,
Pretty, pretty Robin,
Near my Bosom.

WILLIAM BLAKE

THE CHIMNEY-SWEEPER

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

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

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

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

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

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

SONGS OF INNOCENCE

THE DIVINE IMAGE

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

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

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

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

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

W I L L I A M B L A K E

NIGHT

THE sun descending in the west,
The evening star does shine;
The birds are silent in their nest,
And I must seek for mine.
The moon like a flower,
In heaven's high bower,
With silent delight
Sits and smiles on the night.

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

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

SONGS OF INNOCENCE

When wolves and tigers howl for prey,
They pitying stand and weep,
Seeking to drive their thirst away,
And keep them from the sheep;
But if they rush dreadful,
The angels, most heedful,
Receive each mild spirit,
New worlds to inherit.

And there the lion's ruddy eyes
Shall flow with tears of gold,
And pitying the tender cries,
And walking round the fold,
Saying, "Wrath, by his meekness,
And, by his health, sickness
Is driven away
From our immortal day.

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

W I L L I A M B L A K E

A DREAM

ONCE a dream did weave a shade
O'er my Angel-guarded bed,
That an Emmet lost its way
Where on grass methought I lay.

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

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

Pitying, I dropp'd a tear;
But I saw a glow-worm near,
Who replied: "What wailing wight
Calls the watchman of the night?"

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

SONGS OF INNOCENCE

ON ANOTHER'S SORROW

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

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

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

And can He who smiles on all
Hear the wren with sorrows small,
Hear the small bird's grief and care,
Hear the woes that infants bear,

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

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

W I L L I A M B L A K E

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

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

O! He gives to us His joy
That our grief He may destroy.
Till our grief is fled and gone
He doth sit by us and moan.

SONGS OF INNOCENCE

THE LITTLE BOY LOST

"FATHER! father! where are you going?
O do not walk so fast.
Speak, father, speak to your little boy,
Or else I shall be lost."

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

W I L L I A M B L A K E

THE LITTLE BOY FOUND

THE little boy lost in the lonely fen,
Led by the wand'ring light,
Began to cry; but God, ever nigh,
Appear'd like his father in white.

He kissèd the child, and by the hand led,
And to his mother brought,
Who in sorrow pale, thro' the lonely dale,
Her little boy weeping sought.

SONGS OF EXPERIENCE

INTRODUCTION

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

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

'O Earth, O Earth, return! •
Arise from out the dewy grass;
Night is worn,
And the morn
Rises from the slumberous mass.

"Turn away no more;
Why wilt thou turn away?
The starry floor,
The wat'ry shore,
Is giv'n thee till the break of day."

W I L L I A M B L A K E

EARTH'S ANSWER

EARTH rais'd up her head
From the darkness dread and drear.
 Her light fled,—
 Stony dread!
And her locks cover'd with grey despair.

“Prison'd on wat'ry shore,
Starry Jealousy does keep my den.
 Cold and hoar,
 Weeping o'er,
I hear the Father of the ancient men.

“Selfish Father of men!
Cruel, jealous, selfish Fear!
 Can delight,
 Chain'd in night,
The virgins of youth and morning bear?

“Does spring hide its joy
When buds and blossoms grow?
 Does the sower
 Sow by night?
Or the plowman in darkness plow?

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

S O N G S O F E X P E R I E N C E

NURSE'S SONG

WHEN the voices of children are heard on the green,
And whisp'rings are in the dale,
The days of my youth rise fresh in my mind,
My face turns green and pale.

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

W I L L I A M B L A K E

THE FLY

LITTLE Fly,
Thy summer's play
My thoughtless hand
Has brush'd away.

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

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

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

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

SONGS OF EXPERIENCE

THE TIGER

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

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

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

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

When the stars threw down their spears,
And water'd heaven with their tears,
Did He smile His work to see?
Did He who made the Lamb make thee?

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

WILLIAM BLAKE

THE LITTLE GIRL LOST

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

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

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

Seven summers old
Lovely Lyca told;
She had wander'd long
Hearing wild birds' song.

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

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

"If her heart does ache
Then let Lyca wake;

SONGS OF EXPERIENCE

If my mother sleep,
Lyca shall not weep.

“Frowning, frowning night
O’er this desert bright,
Let thy moon arise
While I close my eyes.”

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

The kingly lion stood
And the virgin view’d,
Then he gamboll’d round
O’er the hallow’d ground.

Leopards, tigers, play
Round her as she lay,
While the lion old
Bow’d his mane of gold.

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

While the lioness
Loos’d her slender dress,
And naked they convey’d
To caves the sleeping maid.

W I L L I A M B L A K E

THE LITTLE GIRL FOUND

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

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

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

Pale, thro' pathless ways
The fancied image strays
Famish'd, weeping, weak,
With hollow piteous shriek.

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

In his arms he bore
Her, arm'd with sorrow sore,

S O N G S O F E X P E R I E N C E

Till before their way
A couching lion lay.

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

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

They look upon his eyes
Fill'd with deep surprise;
And wondering behold
A spirit arm'd in gold.

On his head a crown;
On his shoulders down
Flow'd his golden hair.
Gone was all their care.

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

Then they followèd
Where the vision led,

W I L L I A M B L A K E

And saw their sleeping child
Among tigers wild.

To this day they dwell
In a lonely dell;
Nor fear the wolvish howl
Nor the lions' growl.

S O N G S O F E X P E R I E N C E

THE CLOD AND 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 sung a little Clod of clay,
Trodden with the cattle’s feet,
But a Pebble of the brook
Warbled out these metres meet:

“Love seeketh only self to please,
To bind another to its delight,
Joys in another’s loss of ease,
And builds a Hell in Heaven’s despite.”

W I L L I A M B L A K E

THE LITTLE VAGABOND

“DEAR mother, dear mother, the church is cold,
But the ale-house is healthy and pleasant and warm;
Besides I can tell where I am used well,
Such usage in Heaven will never do well.

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

“Then the parson might preach, and drink, and sing,
And we’d be as happy as birds in the spring;
And modest Dame Lurch, who is always at church,
Would not have bandy children, nor fasting, nor birch

“And God, like a father, rejoicing to see
His children as pleasant and happy as He,
Would have no more quarrel with the devil or the
 barrel,
But kiss him, and give him both drink and apparel.”

SONGS OF EXPERIENCE

HOLY THURSDAY

Is this a holy thing to see
In a rich and fruitful land,—
Babes reduc'd to misery,
Fed with cold and usurous hand?

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

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

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

W I L L I A M B L A K E

A POISON TREE

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

And I water'd it in fears,
Night and morning with my tears;
And I sunnèd it with smiles,
And with soft deceitful wiles.

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

And into my garden stole
When the night had veil'd the pole:
In the morning glad I see
My foe outstretch'd beneath the tree.

S O N G S O F E X P E R I E N C E

THE ANGEL

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

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

So he took his wings and fled;
Then the morn blush'd rosy red;
I dried my tears, and arm'd my fears
With ten thousand shields and spears.

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

W I L L I A M B L A K E

THE SICK ROSE

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

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

SONGS OF EXPERIENCE

TO TIRZAH

WHATE'ER is born of mortal birth
Must be consumèd with the earth,
To rise from generation free:
Then what have I to do with thee?

The sexes sprung from shame and pride,
Blow'd in the morn, in evening died;
But Mercy chang'd death into sleep;
The sexes rose to work and weep.

Thou Mother of my mortal part
With cruelty didst mould my heart,
And with false self-deceiving tears
Didst bind my nostrils, eyes, and ears;

Didst close my tongue in senseless clay,
And me to mortal life betray;
The death of Jesus set me free:
Then what have I to do with thee?

It is Raised a spiritual Body.

W I L L I A M B L A K E

THE VOICE OF THE ANCIENT BARD

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

S O N G S O F E X P E R I E N C E

MY PRETTY ROSE-TREE

A FLOWER was offer'd to me,
Such a flower as May never bore;
But I said "I've a pretty Rose-tree,"
And I passèd the sweet flower o'er.

Then I went to my pretty Rose-tree,
To tend her by day and by night,
But my Rose turn'd away with jealousy,
And her thorns were my only delight.

W I L L I A M B L A K E

AH, SUN-FLOWER!

AH, Sun-flower! weary of time,
Who countest the steps of the Sun;
Seeking after that sweet golden clime,
Where the traveller's journey is done;

Where the youth pined away with desire,
And the pale virgin shrouded in snow,
Arise from their graves, and aspire
Where my Sun-flower wishes to go.

S O N G S O F E X P E R I E N C E

THE LILY

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

W I L L I A M B L A K E

THE GARDEN OF LOVE

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

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

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

SONGS OF EXPERIENCE

A LITTLE BOY LOST

"NOUGHT loves another as itself,
Nor venerates another so,
Nor is it possible to Thought
A greater than itself to know:

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

The priest sat by and heard the child,
In trembling zeal he seiz'd his hair:
He led him by his little coat,
And all admir'd the priestly care.

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

The weeping child could not be heard,
The weeping parents wept in vain;
They stripp'd him to his little shirt,
And bound him in an iron chain;

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

W I L L I A M B L A K E

INFANT SORROW

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

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

SONGS OF EXPERIENCE

THE SCHOOLBOY

I LOVE to rise in a summer morn
When the birds sing on every tree;
The distant huntsman winds his horn,
And the skylark sings with me.
O! what sweet company!

But to go to school in a summer morn,
O! it drives all joy away;
Under a cruel eye outworn,
The little ones spend the day
In sighing and dismay.

Ah! then at times I drooping sit,
And spend many an anxious hour,
Nor in my book can I take delight,
Nor sit in learning's bower,
Worn thro' with the dreary shower.

How can the bird that is born for joy
Sit in a cage and sing?
How can a child, when fears annoy,
But droop his tender wing,
And forget his youthful spring?

O! father and mother, if buds are nipp'd
And blossoms blown away,
And if the tender plants are stripp'd
Of their joy in the springing day,
By sorrow and care's dismay,

W I L L I A M B L A K E

How shall the summer arise in joy,
Or the summer fruits appear?
Or how shall we gather what griefs destroy,
Or bless the mellowing year,
When the blasts of winter appear?

SONGS OF EXPERIENCE

LONDON

I WANDER thro' each charter'd street,
Near where the charter'd Thames does flow,
And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

In every cry of every man,
In every infant's cry of fear,
In every voice, in every ban,
The mind-forg'd manacles I hear.

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

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

W I L L I A M B L A K E

A LITTLE GIRL LOST

*Children of the future age,
Reading this indignant page,
Know that in a former time,
Love, sweet Love, was thought a crime!*

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

Once a youthful pair,
Fill'd with softest care,
Met in garden bright
Where the holy light
Had just remov'd the curtains of the night.

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

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

S O N G S O F E X P E R I E N C E

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

“Ona! pale and weak!
To thy *father* speak:
O! the trembling fear,
O! the dismal care,
That shakes the blossoms of my hoary hair!”

W I L L I A M B L A K E

THE CHIMNEY-SWEEPER

A LITTLE black thing among the snow,
Crying "'weep! 'weep!" in notes of woe!
"Where are thy father and mother? say?"—
"They are both gone up to the church to pray:

"Because I was happy upon the heath,
And smil'd among the winter's snow,
They clothèd me in the clothes of death,
And taught me to sing the notes of woe.

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

SONGS OF EXPERIENCE

THE HUMAN ABSTRACT

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

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

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

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

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

The Gods of the earth and sea
Sought through Nature to find this tree;
But their search was all in vain:
There grows one in the human brain.

W I L L I A M B L A K E

A DIVINE IMAGE

CRUELTY has a human heart,
And Jealousy a human face;
Terror the human form divine,
And Secrecy the human dress.

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

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