

Songs of Innocence (1789)

Songs of Experience (1789)

By William Blake

Introduction

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

5 '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;
10 Sing thy songs of happy cheer!'
So I sung the same again,
While he wept with joy to hear.

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

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

Introduction

1 Hear the voice of the Bard,
Who present, past, and future, sees;
Whose ears have heard
The Holy Word

5 That walked among the ancient trees;

Calling the lapséd soul,
And weeping in the evening dew;
That might control
The starry pole,

10 And fallen, fallen light renew!

'O Earth, O Earth, return!
Arise from out the dewy grass!
Night is worn,
And the morn

15 Rises from the slumbrous mass.

'Turn away no more;
Why wilt thou turn away?
The starry floor,
The watery shore,

20 Is given thee till the break of day.'

The Lamb

- 1 Little lamb, who made thee?
Does thou know who made thee,
Gave thee life, and bid thee feed
By the stream and o'er the mead;
5 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?
10 Does 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.
15 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!
20 Little lamb, God bless thee!

The Tyger

- 1 Tyger, tyger, burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?
- 5 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
10 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?
15 What the anvil? what dread grasp
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?
- When the stars threw down their spears,
And watered heaven with their tears,
Did He smile His work to see?
20 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?

The Chimney-Sweeper

- 1 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.
- 5 There's little Tom Dacre, who cried when his head,
That curled like a lamb's back, was shaved; so I said,
'Hush, Tom! never mind it, for, when your head's bare,
You know that the soot cannot spoil your white hair.'

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

And by came an angel, who had a bright key,
And he opened the coffins, and set them all free;
15 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,
20 He'd have God for his father, and never want joy.

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

The Blossom

- 1 Merry, merry sparrow!
Under leaves so green
A happy blossom
Sees you, swift as arrow,
Seek your cradle narrow,
- 5 Near my bosom.
Pretty, pretty robin!
Under leaves so green
A happy blossom
Hears you sobbing, sobbing,
Pretty, pretty robin,
- 10 Near my bosom.

The Chimney-Sweeper

- 1 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.

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

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

A Sick Rose

- 1 O rose, thou art sick!
The invisible worm,
That flies in the night,
In the howling storm,
- 5 Has found out thy bed
Of crimson joy,
And his dark secret love
Does thy life destroy.

Infant Joy

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

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

The Diving Image

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

5 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;
10 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,
15 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,
20 There God is dwelling too.

THE FLY

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

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

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

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

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

THE ANGEL

1 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 beguiled!

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

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

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

The Little Boy Lost

- 1 '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.'
- 5 The night was dark, no father was there,
The child was wet with dew;
The mire was deep, and the child did weep,
And away the vapour flew.

The Little Boy Found

- 1 The little boy lost in the lonely fen,
Led by the wandering light,
Began to cry, but God, ever nigh,
Appeared like his father, in white.
- 5 He kissed the child, and by the hand led,
And to his mother brought,
Who in sorrow pale, through the lonely dale,
Her little boy weeping sought.

A Little Boy Lost

- 1 'Nought loves another as itself,
Nor venerates another so,
Nor is it possible to thought
A greater than itself to know.
- 5 '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;
10 In trembling zeal he seized his hair,
He led him by his little coat,
And all admired his priestly care.
- And standing on the altar high,
'Lo, what a fiend is here!' said he:
15 'One who sets reason up for judge
Of our most holy mystery.'
- The weeping child could not be heard,
The weeping parents wept in vain:
They stripped him to his little shirt,
20 And bound him in an iron chain,
- And burned him in a holy place
Where many had been burned before;
The weeping parents wept in vain.
Are such things done on Albion's shore?

The Little Girl Lost

1 In futurity
I prophesy
That the earth from sleep
(Grave the sentence deep)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Little Girl Found

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Holy Thursday

- 1 'Twas on a holy Thursday, their innocent faces clean,
The children walking two and two, in red, and blue, and green:
Grey-headed beadles walked before, with wands as white as snow,
Till into the high dome of Paul's they like Thames waters flow.
- 5 O what a multitude they seemed, these flowers of London town!
Seated in companies they sit, with radiance all their own.
The hum of multitudes was there, but multitudes of lambs,
Thousands of little boys and girls raising their innocent hands.
- 10 Now like a mighty wind they raise to heaven the voice of song,
Or like harmonious thunderings the seats of heaven among:
Beneath them sit the aged men, wise guardians of the poor.
Then cherish pity, lest you drive an angel from your door.

London

- 1 I wander through each chartered street,
Near where the chartered Thames does flow,
A mark in every face I meet,
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.
- 5 In every cry of every man,
In every infant's cry of fear,
In every voice, in every ban,
The mind-forged manacles I hear:
- How the chimney-sweeper's cry
10 Every blackening church appals,
And the hapless soldier's sigh
Runs in blood down palace-walls.
- But most, through midnight streets I hear
How the youthful harlot's curse
15 Blasts the new-born infant's tear,
And blights with plagues the marriage hearse.

A Cradle Song

- 1 Sweet dreams, form a shade
O'er my lovely infant's head!
Sweet dreams of pleasant streams
By happy, silent, moony beams!
- 5 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
10 Hover over my delight!
Sweet smiles, mother's smiles,
All the livelong night beguiles.
- Sweet moans, dovelike sighs,
Chase not slumber from thy eyes!
15 Sweet moans, sweeter smiles,
All the dovelike moans beguiles.
- Sleep, sleep, happy child!
All creation slept and smiled.
Sleep, sleep, happy sleep,
20 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:
- 25 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,
30 Who became an infant small;
Infant smiles are His own smiles;
Heaven and earth to peace beguiles.

A Cradle Song

- 1 Sleep, sleep, beauty bright,
Dreaming in the joys of night;
Sleep, sleep; in thy sleep
Little sorrows sit and weep.
- 5 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,
10 Smiles as of the morning steal
O'er thy cheek, and o'er thy breast
Where thy little heart doth rest.
- O the cunning wiles that creep
In thy little heart asleep!
15 When thy little heart doth wake,
Then the dreadful light shall break.

On Another's Sorrow

- 1 Can I see another's woe,
And not be in sorrow too?
Can I see another's grief,
And not seek for kind relief?
- 5 Can I see a falling tear,
And not feel my sorrow's share?
Can a father see his child
Weep, nor be with sorrow filled?
- Can a mother sit and hear
10 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,
15 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,
20 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!
- 25 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,
30 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:
35 Till our grief is fled and gone
He doth sit by us and moan.

The Voice of the Ancient Bard

- 1 Youth of delight! come hither
And see the opening morn,
Image of Truth new-born.
Doubt is fled, and clouds of reason,
- 5 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;
- 10 And feel—they know not what but care;
And wish to lead others, when they should be led.