

Contents

Selected Poetry	I
EARLY POEMS (WRITTEN BEFORE 1813)	3
‘A Cat in Distress’	5
Sonnet, To a Balloon Laden with Knowledge	6
Sonnet, On Launching Some Bottles Filled with Knowledge into the Bristol Channel	7
FROM ALASTOR, OR THE SPIRIT OF SOLITUDE AND OTHER POEMS	9
ALASTOR, OR THE SPIRIT OF SOLITUDE	11
To — (“Oh, there are spirits of the air”)	33
Stanzas – April 1814	35
Mutability	36
On Death	37
A Summer-Evening Churchyard	38
To Wordsworth	39
Feelings of a Republican on the Fall of Bonaparte	40
Sonnet, From the Italian of Dante	41
POEMS WRITTEN IN 1816	43
Hymn to Intellectual Beauty	45
Mont Blanc	48
Lines (“The cold earth slept below”)	52
POEMS WRITTEN IN 1817	53
‘A Golden-Wingèd Angel Stood’	55
‘To Thirst and Find No Fill...’	56
‘Wealth and Dominion Fade into the Mass’	57
Lines to a Critic	58
Ozymandias	59

POEMS WRITTEN IN 1818	61
Lines Written among the Euganean Hills	63
Invocation to Misery	73
Stanzas Written in Dejection, near Naples	76
The Woodman and the Nightingale	78
Sonnet ("Lift not the painted veil which those who live")	81
'Silence! Oh, Well Are Death and Sleep and Thou'	82
 JULIAN AND MADDALO	 83
 POEMS WRITTEN IN 1819	 103
Ode to the West Wind	105
The Indian Serenade	108
On the Medusa of Leonardo Da Vinci in the Florentine Gallery	109
'At the Creation of the Earth'	111
'And Who Feels Discord Now or Sorrow?'	112
'I Am as a Spirit Who Has Dwelt'	113
'Is It That in Some Brighter Sphere'	114
'Is Not Today Enough? Why Do I Peer'	115
'Ye Gentle Visitations of Calm Thought'	116
'Wake the Serpent Not, Lest He'	117
'I Am Drunk with the Honey Wine'	118
The Masque of Anarchy	119
 POEMS WRITTEN IN 1820	 133
The Sensitive Plant	135
The Cloud	144
To a Skylark	147
Ode to Liberty	150
To — ("I fear thy kisses, gentle maiden")	158
Ode to Naples	159
Autumn, a Dirge	164
The Waning Moon	165
The World's Wanderers	166
'Thou Living Light That in Thy Rainbow Hues'	167
Letter to Maria Gisborne	168

THE WITCH OF ATLAS	177
POEMS WRITTEN IN 1821	201
Lines ("Far, far away, O ye")	203
To — ("Music, when soft voices die")	204
The Aziola	205
A Lament	206
Evening	207
On Keats	208
EPIPSYCHIDION	209
ADONAIS	229
POEMS WRITTEN IN 1822	249
Lines ("When the lamp is shattered")	251
The Recollection	253
To a Lady with a Guitar	256
A Dirge	259
Lines Written in the Bay of Lerici	260
The Triumph of Life	262
<i>Sources</i>	278
<i>Note on the Texts</i>	280
<i>Notes</i>	280
Index of Titles and First Lines	311

Selected Poetry

EARLY POEMS

(WRITTEN BEFORE 1813)

‘A Cat in Distress’*

A cat in distress,
Nothing more nor* less;
Good folks, I must faithfully tell ye,
As I am a sinner,
It waits for some dinner
To stuff out its own little belly.

You would not easily guess
All the modes of distress
Which torture the tenants of earth,
And the various evils 10
Which like so many devils
Attend the poor souls* from their birth.

Some a living require,
And others desire
An old fellow out of the way –
And which is the best
I leave to be guessed,
For I cannot pretend to say.

One wants society,
Another* variety, 20
Others a tranquil life;
Some want food,
Others, as good,
Only want* a wife.

But this poor little cat
Only wanted a rat
To stuff out its own little maw –
And it were as good
Some people had such food
To make them *hold their jaw!** 30

Sonnet*

TO A BALLOON LADEN WITH KNOWLEDGE

Bright ball of flame that through the gloom of even
Silently takest thine ethereal way
And with surpassing glory dimm'st each ray
Twinkling amid the dark-blue depths of heaven –
Unlike the fire thou bearest, soon shalt thou
Fade like a meteor in surrounding gloom,
Whilst that, unquenchable, is doomed to glow
A watch-light by the patriot's lonely tomb,
A ray of courage to the oppressed and poor,
A spark, though gleaming on the hovel's hearth,
Which through the tyrant's gilded domes shall roar,
A beacon in the darkness of the Earth,
A sun which, o'er the renovated scene,
Shall dart like Truth where Falsehood yet has been.

10

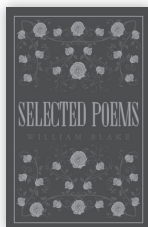
Sonnet

ON LAUNCHING SOME BOTTLES FILLED WITH
KNOWLEDGE INTO THE BRISTOL CHANNEL

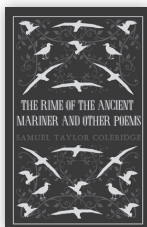
Vessels of heavenly medicine, may the breeze
Auspicious waft your dark-green forms to shore!
Safe may ye stem* the wide surrounding roar
Of the wild whirlwinds and the raging seas –
And oh! if Liberty e'er deigned to stoop
From yonder lowly throne her crownless brow,
Sure she will breathe around your emerald group
The fairest breezes of her west that blow.
Yes – she will waft ye to some freeborn soul
Whose eye-beam, kindling as it meets your freight, 10
Her heaven-born flame in suffering Earth will light,
Until its radiance gleams from pole to pole
And tyrant hearts with powerless envy burst
To see their night of ignorance dispersed.

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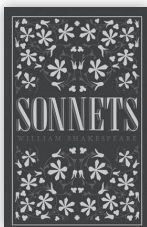
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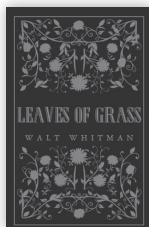
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