

CLASSIC LIVING BOOK

SONGS OF  
INNOCENCE  
AND EXPERIENCE

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William Blake

COMPLETE AND UNABRIDGED

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# Songs of Innocence and Experience

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WILLIAM BLAKE





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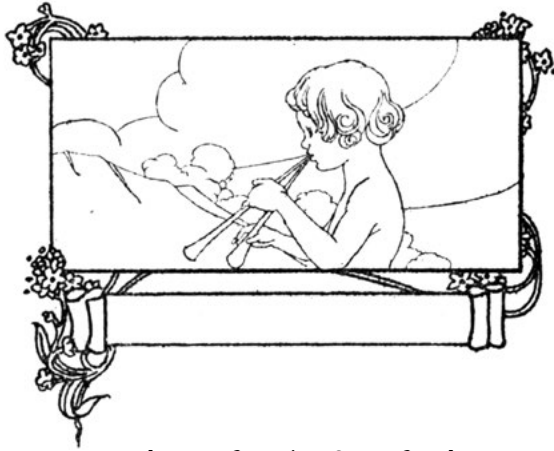
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# SONGS OF INNOCENCE



On a cloud I saw a child.





## 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 sung 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 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  
Every child may joy to hear.





## 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 lambs' innocent call,  
And he hears the ewes' tender reply;  
He is watchful while they are in peace,  
For they know when their shepherd is nigh.



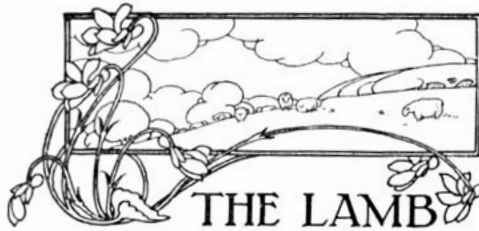


The sun does arise,  
And make happy the skies;  
The merry bells ring  
To welcome the Spring;  
The skylark and thrush,  
The birds of the bush,  
Sing louder around  
To the bells' cheerful sound;  
While our sports shall be seen  
On the echoing green.

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





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;  
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?  
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.



Little Lamb, who made thee?

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!







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 bereaved 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  
Are but a cloud, and like a shady grove.

‘For, when our souls have learned the heat to bear,  
The cloud 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 kissed 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,

‘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.’



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.





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 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,  
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;  
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.

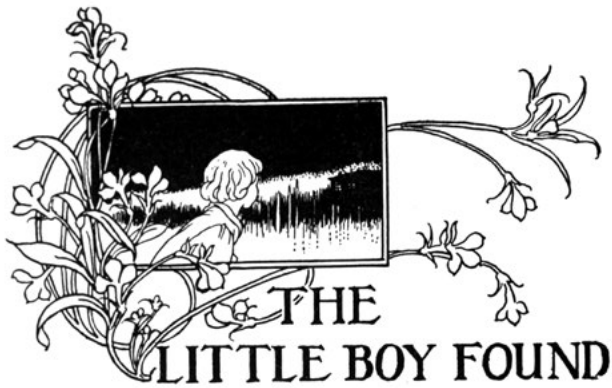
And so Tom awoke, and we rose in the dark,  
And got with our bags and our brushes to work.  
Though the morning was cold, Tom was happy  
    and warm:  
So, if all do their duty, they need not fear harm.



'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.





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.

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.





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, dove-like sighs,  
Chase not slumber from thy eyes!  
Sweet moans, sweeter smiles,  
All the dove-like moans beguiles.



Sleep, sleep, happy child!  
All creation slept and smiled.  
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:

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.

