

Selected Poetry

Percy Bysshe Shelley



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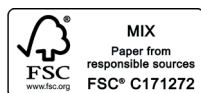
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Selected Poetry

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

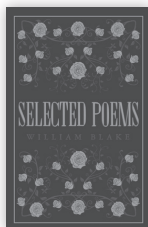
Sonnet

ON LAUNCHING SOME BOTTLES FILLED WITH
KNOWLEDGE INTO THE BRISTOL CHANNEL

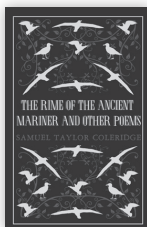
Vessels of heavenly medicine, may the breeze
Auspicious waft your dark-green forms to shore!
Safe may ye stem* the wide surrounding roar
Of the wild whirlwinds and the raging seas –
And oh! if Liberty e'er deigned to stoop
From yonder lowly throne her crownless brow,
Sure she will breathe around your 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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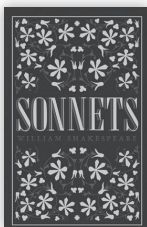
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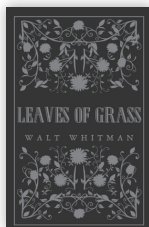
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