THE BOOK

THE

Author & Printer Willm Blake, 1789
The daughters of Minerva led round their singing flocks.
All but the youngest, she in paleness sought the secret air.
To fade away like morning beauty from her mortal day:
Down by the river of Aetona her soft voice is heard:
And thus her gentle lamentation falls like morning dew.

O, life of this our spring! Why fades the luna of the water?
Why fade these children of the spring? born but to smile and fall.
Ah! Teth is like a weary bow, and like a parting cloud.
Like a reflection in a glass, like shadows in the water.
Like dreams of infants, like a smile upon an infant's face.
Like the dove's voice, like transient day, like music in the air.
Ah! gentle may I lay me down, and gentle rest my head.
And gentle sleep, the sleep of death, and gentle hear the voice
Of him that walketh in the garden in the evening time.

The Lilly of the valley breathing in the humble grass.
Answered the lovely maid and said: I am a watery weed.
And I am very small, and love to dwell in lowly vales.
So weak, the gilded butterfly scarce percheth on my head.
Yet I am visited from heaven, and he that smiles on all.
Walks in the valley, and each morn over me spreads his hand
Saying, rejoice thou humble grass, thou new-born lily flower.
Then gentle maid of silent valleys, and of modest brooks:
For thou shalt be clothed in light, and fed with morning Aetona;
Till summer's heat melts thee beside the fountains and the springs
To flourish in eternal vales; then why should Teth complain.
Why should the mistresses of the vales of Har, utter a sigh
She ceased & smiled in tears, then sat down in her silver shrine.

Thel answered, O thou little virgin of the peaceful valley,
Giving to those that cannot crave, the woeceles, the perfired.
Thy breath doth nourish the innocent lamb, he smells thy milky garments
He crops thy flowers, while thou sittest smiling in his face.
Wiping his mild and meekin mouth from all contagious taints.
Thy wine doth purify the golden honey, thy perfume.
Which thou dost scatter on every little blade of grass that springs.
Revives the milked cow, & tames the fire-breathing steed.

But Thel is like a faint cloud kindled at the rising sun.
I vanish from my pearly throne, and who shall find me place.

Queen of the vales the Lilly answered, ask the tender cloud.
And it shall tell thee why it glitters in the morning sky.
And why it scatters its bright beauty thru the humed air.
Descend O little cloud & hover before the eyes of Thel.

The cloud descended, and the Lilly bowed her modest head:
And went to mind her numerous charge among the verdant grass.
O little Cloud, the virgin said, I charge thee tell to me
Why thou complainest not when in one hour thou fade away?
Then we shall seek thee but not find; ah Thel is like to thee.
I waits away, yet I complain, and no one hears my voice.

The Cloud then shewed his golden head & his bright form emerged,
Hovering and glittering on the air before the face of Thel.

0 virgin knowest thou not, our steeds drink of the golden springs
Where Luwaah doth renew his horses; lookest thou on my youth,
And fearest thou because I vanish and am seen no more.
Nothing remains; O maid I tell thee, when I fades away,
It is to tenfold life, to love, to peace, and raptures holy:
Unseen descending, weigh my light wings upon balmy flowers;
And court the fair eyed dew, to take me to her shining tent;
The weeping virgin, trembling kneels before the risen sun,
Till we arise binds in a golden band, and never part;
But walk united, bearing food to all our tender flowers.

Dost thou O little Cloud? I fear that I am not like thee;
For I walk through the vales of Har, and smell the sweetest flowers:
But I feed not the little flowers; I hear the warbling birds;
But I feed not the warbling birds, they fly and seek their food;
But Thel delights in these no more because I fade away,
And all shall say, without a word, this shining woman liveth.
Or did she only live, to be at death the food of worms.

The Cloud reclined upon his airy throne and answered thus.

Then if thou art the food of worms, O virgin of the skies,
How great thy use, how great thy blessing; every thing that lives,
Lives not alone, nor for itself; fear not and I will call
The weak worm from its lowly bed, and thou shalt hear its voice.
Come forth worm of the silent valley, to thy pensive queen.

The helples worm arose, and sat upon the Lily's leaf,
And the bright Cloud said on, to find his partner in the vale.
III.

Then Thel astonish'd view'd the Worm upon its weary bed.

Art thou a Worm? image of weakness, art thou but a Worm? I see thee like an infant wrapped in the Lilies leaf: At weep not little voice, thou canst not speak but thou canst weep: Is this a Worm? I see thee lay helpless & naked: weeping, And none to answer, none to cherish thee with mothers smiles:

The God of clay heard the Worm's voice & raised her piping head: She bowl'd over the weeping infant, and her life exhald In milky fondness then on Thel she fix'd her humble eyes.

O beauty of the vales of Hur, we live not for ourselves. Thou seest me the meanest thing, and so I am indeed: My bosom of itself is cold, and of itself is dark,
But he that loves the lowly, pours his oil upon my head,
And kisses me, and binds his nuptial bands around my breast,
And says: Thou mother of my children, I have loved thee.
And I have given thee a crown that none can take away.
But how this is sweet maid, I know not, and I cannot know,
I ponder, and I cannot ponder; yet I live and love.

The daughter of beauty wiped her pitying tears with her white veil,
And said: Alas! I know not this, and therefore did I weep.
That God would love a Worm I knew, and punish the evil lost
That willful, brutal its helpless form: but that he cherished it
With milk and oil, I never knew; and therefore did I weep.
And I complained in the mild air, because I fade away,
And lay me down in the cold bed, and leave my shining lot.

Queen of the vales, the matron Clay answered; I heard thy sighs,
And all thy means flew oer my roof, but I have called them down;
Wilt thou O Queen enter my house, its given thee to enter.
And to return; fear nothing, enter with thy virtuous feet.
The eternal gates terrible porter lifted the northern bar:
Thel entered in & saw the secrets of the land unknown:
She saw the couches of the dead, & where the fibrous roots
Of every heart on earth valises deep its restless twists:
A land of sorrows & of tears where never smile was seen.

She wandered in the land of clouds thru valleys dark, listening
Voilours & lamentations; waiting oft beside a dewy grave
She stood in silence, listening to the voices of the ground,
Till to her own grave plot she came, & there she sat down.
And heard this voice of sorrow breathed from the hollow pit.

Why cannot the Ear be closed to its own destruction,
Oh the glinting eye to the poison of a smile!
Why are Eyelids staid with arrows ready drawn,
Where a thousand fighting men in ambush lie!
Or an eye of gifts & graces, showing fruits & coined gold?

Why a tongue impelled with honey from every wind?
Why an Ear, a whirlpool fierce to draw creations in?
Why a nostril wide inhaling terror trembling & affright.
Why a tender rush upon the youthful burning boy.
Why a little curtain of flesh on the bed of our desire?

The Virgin started from her seat, & with a shriek
Fled back unhurried till she came into the vales of

The End
THEL’s Motto.

Does the Eagle know what is in the pit?
Or wilt thou go ask the Mole:
Can Wisdom be put in a silver rod?
Or Love in a golden bowl?