

Classic Poetry Series

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- poems -

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An Evening Reflection

1

The day conceals its brilliant face,
And dark night covers up the fields,
Black shadows creep upon the hills,
Light's rays recede from us.
Before us gapes a well of stars -
Stars infinite, well fathomless.

2

A grain of sand in ocean swells,
A tiny glint in endless ice,
Fine ash caught in a mighty gale,
A feather in a raging fire,
So I am lost in this abyss,
Oppressed by thoughts profound.

3

The mouths of wise men call to us:
"A multitude of worlds dwell there,
Among them burning suns untold,
And peoples, and the wheel of time:
There, all of nature's strength
Exists God's glory to proclaim"

4

But where, O nature, is your law?
Dawn breaks from out of northern lands!
Is this the home of our sun's throne?
Or are the icy oceans burning?
Behold, cold fire envelops us!
Behold, now day has entered night.

5

O thou, whose lively gaze can see
Into the book of law eternal,
For whom the smallest part of things
Reveals the code in all of nature,
Thou comprehendest planets' course,
Now tell us what disturbs our souls?

6

Why do these bright rays sparkle in the night?
Why does fine flame assault the land?
Without a thundercloud can lightning
Rise from the earth up toward the heavens?
How can it be that frozen steam
Gives birth to fire from winter's depths?

7

There, oily darkness battles water,
Or rays of sunlight sparkle bright,
Bend toward us through the thickened air;

Or do the peaks of stout hills glow,
Or have the sea winds ceased their song,
And smooth waves struck the space.

8

Regarding what lies right before us
Thine answer's full of doubts
O, tell us, how enormous is the world?
What lies beyond the smallest stars?
Are thou aware of all creation's end?
Tell us, how great is our Creator?

Mikhail Vasilyevich Lomonosov

An Ode in Blessed Memory

1

A sudden bliss has seized my mind,
And to a mountain peak it carries me
Up where the wind's forgotten how to stir the trees;
The deepest valley lies in silence.
Perceiving something, quiet goes the brook
That used to babble without cease
When rushing swiftly down the hill.
There, they are braiding laurel wreaths
And word is spread to every side;
Smoke curls up from the fields afar.

2

Do I see Pindus down below me?
I hear the pristine sisters' songs!
With flame Permessian I burn,
I strive in haste toward their visage.
They've given me the healing water:
Drink, and forget your every toil;
Rinse out your eyes with dew Castalian.
Beyond steppes and mountains cast your gaze,
Direct your soul toward those lands
Where morning breaks upon dark night.

3

Just like a ship 'midst raving waves
That threaten to engulf it,
Severs their frothing caps,
And clings steadfastly to its course
Amidst the raging silver foam,
Its wake ablaze across the deep:
Thus did the hordes of Tatars haste
Around to meet the Russian force;
Cavalry steam obscures the sky!
What happens then? They're felled at once.

4

Love for the Fatherland empowers
The souls and hands of Russian sons;
They each desire to spill their blood,
They draw their strength from sounds of war.
How does the mighty lion scare
A wolf pack baring poison teeth
Showing ferocious, gleaming eyes?
His roaring quakes the woods and shore,
His tail churns up the dust and sand,
Uncoiling mightily, he strikes.

5

Is it bronze thunder in Mount Etna's breast,
That bubbles in a sulfurous brew?
Or is it Hades shattering his chains,

And throwing wide his gaping jaws?
It is the nation of an outcast slave
Igniting a high castle's moat,
Raining down steel and flame upon the valley
Where our well-chosen warriors,
Ringed all around by swamps and foes,
Storm the swift current into fire.

6
O, hide your forces, Istanbul,
In mountains, where the fiery sky
Belches out ashes, flames and death;
Beyond where Tigris scours its banks.
But in this world there is no barrier
That could curtail the eagles' flight.
They stop for naught: not waters, forests,
Hills, torrents or the wildest steppes.
The eagle legions can attain
Heights that are scaled by wind alone.

7
Let earth, like Pontus, heave and breathe,
Let all the world's expanses groan,
Let blackest smoke obscure the light
Moldavan peaks be drenched in blood;
But none of this can hinder you,
O Rus', for fate herself protects you
In blessed Anna's name.
And now your ardent zeal for Her
Carries you swift through Tatar ranks,
Cutting wide swathes for you to pass.

8
The day conceals its rays amidst the waves,
And leaves the fight to burn against night;
The Tatar prince has perished in the dark;
The Tatars loose both light and hope.
A wolf steals from the deepest woods
Toward the pallid Turkish corpse.
Then someone watching his last sunset,
Cries out, "O, veil this crimson scene,
And cover up Muhammad's shame!
Sink like the sun into the sea!"

9
Why is my soul thus seized by fear?
My blood runs cold, my heart laments!
What sudden clamour strikes my ear?
The woods and desert wind are howling!
Fierce beasts are hiding in a cave,
The door of heaven opens wide,
Above the army, stormclouds part -

Then all at once the Hero enters,
His face aflame, he routs the foe
With blood-washed sword.

10
Is it not he, who razed the fortress
That threatened Rus' beside the flowing Don?
Is it not he who struck the Persians down
Amidst the thirsting reaches of the steppe?
Just such a gaze he cast upon his foes
When he debarked on Gothic shores,
Just such a mighty hand he raised,
And his steed galloped just as swift
When now his legions trampled the plains
That lie before the dawning day.

11
All round him from the clouds above
Rain thunderbolts and lightning,
And sensing Peter's forces nigh
The woodlands and fields lie trembling.
Who joins his fierce gaze to the south,
All cloaked in terrifying thunder?
It must be he the victor at Kazan,
Who by the Caspian's banks
Did overthrow the proud Selim -
And strew the steppe with Pagan heads.

12
One hero speaks now to the other:
"We did not toil in vain,
Nor were our exploits futile:
For now the world's in awe of Rus'.
Our work has broadened our frontiers
To north, to west and to the east.
And in the south, our Anna celebrates,
Bestows this triumph on her people."
Now darkness closes round our heroes -
Conceals them from our eyes and ears.

13
The river swirls with Tatar blood
That's spilled among the warriors.
And fearing battle to rejoin,
The foe escapes across the barren land,
Abandons sword, encampment, shame,
They paint a ghastly sight while running
Through their slain brothers blood.
Even the slightest trembling leaf
Strikes fear into their hearts now
Like screaming cannonballs.

14

The woods and vales sing out with springs
"O, victory to Rus'! O, victory!"
The foe now fleeing Russian swords
Is terrified by of his own steps.
Then, seeing her own men in flight,
The moon, ashamed of their disgrace,
Doth blush and hide her face in gloom.
And glory flies in dark of night,
With trumpets to all lands to herald
The terrifying might of Rus'.

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