

Classic Poetry Series

William Roscoe

- poems -

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Earth

SAD is my lot; among the shining spheres
Wheeling, I weave incessant day and night,
And ever, in my never-ending flight,
Add woes to woes, and count up tears on tears.
Young wives' and new-born infants' hapless biers
Lie on my breast, a melancholy sight;
Fresh griefs abhor my fresh returning light;
Pain and remorse and want fill up my years.
My happier children's farther-piercing eyes
Into the blessed solvent future climb,
And knit the threads of joy and hope and warning;
But I, the ancient mother, am not wise,
And, shut within the blind obscure of time,
Roll on from morn to night, and on from night to morning.

William Roscoe

The Butterfly's Ball and the Grasshopper's Feast

Come take up your Hats, and away let us haste
To the Butterfly's Ball, and the Grasshopper's Feast.
The Trumpeter, Gad-fly, has summon'd the Crew,
And the Revels are now only waiting for you.

So said little Robert, and pacing along,
His merry Companions came forth in a Throng.
And on the smooth Grass, by the side of a Wood,
Beneath a broad Oak that for Ages had stood,

Saw the Children of Earth, and the Tenants of Air,
For an Evening's Amusement together repair.
And there came the Beetle, so blind and so black,
Who carried the Emmet, his Friend, on his Back.

And there was the Gnat and the Dragon-fly too,
With all their Relations, Green, Orange, and Blue.
And there came the Moth, with his Plumage of Down,
And the Hornet in Jacket of Yellow and Brown;

Who with him the Wasp, his Companion, did bring,
But they promis'd, that Evening, to lay by their Sting.
And the sly little Dormouse crept out of his Hole,
And brought to the Feast his blind Brother, the Mole.

And the Snail, with his Horns peeping out of his Shell,
Came from a great Distance, the Length of an Ell.
A Mushroom their Table, and on it was laid
A Water-dock Leaf, which a Table-cloth made.

The Viands were various, to each of their Taste,
And the Bee brought her Honey to crown the Repast.
Then close on his Haunches, so solemn and wise,
The Frog from a Corner, look'd up to the Skies.

And the Squirrel well pleas'd such Diversions to see,
Mounted high over Head, and look'd down from a Tree.
Then out came the Spider, with Finger so fine,
To shew his Dexterity on the tight Line.

From one Branch to another, his Cobwebs he slung,
Then quick as an Arrow he darted along,
But just in the Middle, -- Oh! shocking to tell,
From his Rope, in an Instant, poor Harlequin fell.

Yet he touch'd not the Ground, but with Talons outspread,
Hung suspended in Air, at the End of a Thread,
Then the Grasshopper came with a Jerk and a Spring,
Very long was his Leg, though but short was his Wing;

He took but three Leaps, and was soon out of Sight,
Then chirp'd his own Praises the rest of the Night.

With Step so majestic the Snail did advance,
And promis'd the Gazers a Minuet to dance.

But they all laugh'd so loud that he pull'd in his Head,
And went in his own little Chamber to Bed.
Then, as Evening gave Way to the Shadows of Night,
Their Watchman, the Glow-worm, came out with a Light.

Then Home let us hasten, while yet we can see,
For no Watchman is waiting for you and for me.
So said little Robert, and pacing along,
His merry Companions returned in a Throng.

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The Butterfly's Ball, and the Grasshopper's Feast

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His merry Companions returned in a Throng. END OF THE BUTTERFLY'S BALL.

William Roscoe

The Master-Chord

LIKE a musician that with flying finger
Startles the voice of some new instrument,
And, though he know that in one string are blent
All its extremes of sound, yet still doth linger
Among the lighter threads, fearing to start
The deep soul of that one melodious wire,
Lest it, unanswering, dash his high desire,
And spoil the hopes of his expectant heart;
Thus, with my mistress oft conversing, I
Stir every lighter theme with careless voice,
Gathering sweet music and celestial joys
From the harmonious soul o'er which I fly;
Yet o'er the one deep master-chord I hover,
And dare not stoop, fearing to tell—I love her.

William Roscoe

To La Sansoeur

I KNOW not how to call you light,
Since I myself was lighter;
Nor can you blame my changing plight
Who were the first inviter.

I know not which began to range
Since we were never constant;
And each when each began to change
Was found a weak remonstrant.

But this I know, the God of Love
Both shake his hand against us,
And scorning says we ne'er did prove
True passion—but pretences.

William Roscoe