

Classic Poetry Series

Joseph Blanco White
- poems -

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Joseph Blanco White(1775 - 1841)

Born in Seville. A Catholic priest, he came to England in 1810 following Napoleon's conquest of Spain and took on the surname White.

Studying at Oxford, he became an Anglican cleric and wrote various ecclesiastical poetry. To Night was described by Samuel Taylor Coleridge as 'the finest sonnet in the English language'.

Blanco White's last 6 years were spent in Liverpool where he was a member of the city's Unitarian Church. He was buried in the Renshaw Street chapels cemetery, which is now the site of the Roscoe Memorial Gardens in Mount Pleasant.

To Night

Mysterious Night! when our first parent knew
Thee from report divine, and heard thy name,
Did he not tremble for this lovely frame,
This glorious canopy of light and blue?
Yet 'neath a curtain of translucent dew,
Bathed in the rays of the great setting flame,
Hesperus with the host of heaven came,
And lo! Creation widened in man's view.
Who could have thought such darkness lay concealed
Within thy beams, O Sun! or who could find,
Whilst fly and leaf and insect stood revealed,
That to such countless orbs thou mad'st us blind!
Why do we then shun death with anxious strife?
If Light can thus deceive, wherefore not Life?

Joseph Blanco White