

William Blake (1757-1827)

## **BLIND-MAN'S BUFF.**

- WHEN silver snow decks Susan's clothes,  
And jewel hangs at th' shepherd's nose,  
The blushing bank is all my care,  
With hearth so red, and walls so fair.
- 5 "Heap the sea-coal, come, heap it higher,  
"The oaken log lay on the fire:"  
The well-wash'd stools, a circling row,  
With lad and lass, how fair the show!  
The merry can of nut-brown ale,
- 10 The laughing jest, the love-sick tale,  
Till, tired of chat, the game begins,  
The lasses prick the lads with pins;  
Roger from Dolly twitch'd the stool,  
She falling, kiss'd the ground, poor fool!
- 15 She blush'd so red, with side-long glance  
At hobnail Dick, who grieved the chance.  
But now for Blind-man's Buff they call;  
Of each incumbrance clear the hall -  
Jenny her silken kerchief folds,
- 20 And blear-eyed Will the black lot holds,  
Now laughing, stops, with "Silence, hush!"  
  
And Peggy Pout gives Sam a push. -  
The Blind-man's arms, extended wide,  
Sam slips between: - "woe betide
- 25 Thee, clumsy Will!" - but tittering Kate  
Is penn'd up in the corner strait!  
And now Will's eyes beheld the play,  
He thought his face was t'other way.  
"Now, Kitty, now; what chance hast thou,
- 30 "Roger so near thee trips, I vow !"  
She catches him - then Roger ties  
His own head up - but not his eyes;  
For thro' the slender cloth he sees,  
And runs at Sam, who slips with ease
- 35 His clumsy hold: and, dodging round.  
Sukey is tumbled on the ground! -  
"See what it is to play unfair!  
"Where cheating is, there's mischief there."

But Roger still pursues the chace, -  
40 "He sees! he sees!" cries softly Grace;  
"Roger, thou, unskili'd in art  
"Must, surer bound, go thro' thy part!"  
Now Kitty, pert, repeats the rhymes  
And Roger turns him round three times.  
45 Then pauses ere he starts; but Dick  
Was mischief-bent upon a trick;  
Down on his hands and knees he lay  
Directly in the Blind-man's way,  
Then cries out, "Hem!" Hodge heard, and ran  
50 With hood-wink'd chance - sure of his man;  
But down he came. - Alas, how frail  
Our best of hopes, how soon they fail!  
With crimson drops he stains the ground,  
Confusion startles all around!  
55 Poor piteous Dick supports his head,  
And fain would cure the hurt he made;  
But Kitty hasted with a key  
And down his back they straight convey  
The cold relief - the blood is stay'd  
60 And Hodge again holds up his head.  
Such are the fortunes of the game,  
And those who play should stop the same  
By wholesome laws, such as - all those  
Who on the blinded man impose,  
65 Stand in his stead; as long ago  
When men were first a nation grown,  
Lawless they lived, till wantonness  
And liberty began t' increase,  
And one man lay in another's way;  
70 Then laws were made to keep fair play.  
(465 words)

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