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3  
POEMS ABOUT BIRDS

Come tell us, O tell us,  
Thou strange mortality!  
What's *thy* thought of us, Dear?—  
Here's *our* thought of thee.

FRANCIS THOMPSON.

" Music . . . an art common to men and birds."

ANATOLE FRANCE.

" True to the kindred points of Heaven and Home."

WORDSWORTH.

POEMS ABOUT BIRDS

*From the Middle Ages to the Present  
Day* Chosen and Edited, with an Introduction  
and Notes by H. J. MASSINGHAM

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WITH A PREFACE BY  
J. C. SQUIRE

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To S.

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## PREFACE

*IN England the birds are all around us. As I write I am in a room in Outer London, with miles of suburbs still between me and the open country. I have just stood, first at the back window, over the small garden with its acacia, its two pear-trees, its little grove of lilacs and flowering currants, and then at the window in front which overlooks a road, a waterside garden, and the osiers of Chiswick Eyot and the Thames, with the houses of Barnes beyond. Everywhere there are birds, perched and flying: starlings crossing the upper air, sparrows troubling the holly, a thrush intermittently singing behind the upper veils of the ash-tree, chaffinches tinkling somewhere unseen. So it is all the year. In mere point of frequency the birds are far more commonly seen here than anything else in animate nature, excepting man: for us they are, to all intents and purposes, animate nature. There are insects, many if one looks for them, few if one does not: a pair of chasing white butterflies, a ladybird on a rose-leaf, a little bronzed beetle now and then, and in their season caterpillars of the currant and vapourer moths. Animals, beyond the domestic, are not here at all. Twice a year, perhaps, I may hear a plop in the water and catch sight of a ripple and the head of a water-rat hurrying to the overhung bank of the island. But the birds are always present, numerous and various, even here. The twittering of the small birds is perpetual; every morning's dew is printed with the claws of blackbirds and thrushes, a robin nested this year behind the thick streamers of the virginia creeper on the back wall,*

tits ceaselessly hop about on the high twigs of the fruit-trees. Year by year a pair of crows have built in a tall poplar by the river. They came back this year to find it pollarded, circled in bewilderment for a morning around the space where the vanished tree-top had been, and then resigned themselves to a new home. Wild ducks swim on the smooth water, gulls on the stormy. There are swans which sail proudly as Spenser's. Every year a pair tries to raise a family on the Eyot. The eggs are usually addled by a spring tide. This year a benevolent and bold neighbour moved their nest a foot higher when they were off it; and now there is a family of cygnets, learning to swim, struggling against the tide and climbing between their mother's wings when they are exhausted, she moving steadily on, a solicitous but a severe parent. On summer evenings, as we pass the Eyot in a boat, a heron often will rise out of the reeds, looking, if it is getting dark, like a tattered black flag, and will flap away up-river, disappearing into the twilight. Then, as the year wears on, the migrants rest on the osiers in thousands, and especially armies of swallows. They will fly about the sky, very high up, like an immense swarm of gnats, and then, in long streamers, all drop suddenly down. There they perch, not one visible, but the whole reed-bed alive with them; a small stone thrown into the midst will send a great cloud of them fluttering and chirping up into the dim air.

So it is all over England. There are countries where most of the birds migrate, and a winter's day may pass without a bird being seen. There are

*countries where small birds are few, because they are no sooner seen than they are shot for food. There are others rich in gorgeous screeching birds, but poor in the homelier singers. In England the birds and their music are everywhere. It is natural therefore that our literature should be full of them, and especially our poetry. The commonest objects must be, to use for the moment no stronger word, "mentioned" more often than the others. They are a noticeable part of almost every natural background; whatever mood or action we may be experiencing, if it be "set" out of doors, birds will be present, birds will probably be singing, and they will consequently be associated with our theme, as the other common elements of nature will be, sun and clouds, trees and grasses. By the same token the commonest birds, the thrushes and blackbirds, rooks, peewits, robins, and sparrows, will "occur" in literature more frequently than rails or hoopoes. Unless a man deliberately go in search of these last he will seldom if ever see them; the others are daily, as it were, thrust upon us, and no desire for a change of imagery will alter the fact.*

*It will be found that the poets represented in Mr. Massingham's delightful and representative anthology have seen their birds in various aspects and written of them in manners of an analogous variety. There are those who, describing nature with a calm and comprehensive affection, have noted the characters and habits of birds as they have noted those of beasts, the transformations of the weather, and the passage of the seasons. Chaucer and Clare, Thompson and*

*Cowper and Crabbe had an eye for their individualities and knew their ways of life. Yet mere existence in nature, the mere being a bird, would not in itself have led to the large literature which has been written about birds. Were there no other birds than the vulture and the kite, though these might have sat on every roof, bird-literature would not have been what it is, though vultures and kites would necessarily be frequently spoken of. We find in most of the tribe of birds—and the philosophers may discuss why—beauties which appeal to our æsthetic sense. These beauties they share with other living things. The appealing softness and daintiness which Burns found in the linnet is precisely what he found in the field-mouse : his poems to the two are twins. The gorgeous colours of Pope's pheasant and Milton's peacock are also worn by certain snakes and baboons ; the gazelle is gentle and shy, the lion majestic, the greyhound and the dragon-fly are swift. The physical beauties of the birds and the lovely qualities of their movements are not peculiar to them ; but they are all around us and they possess them, and particularly an appearance of softness and grace, more plentifully than any other creatures. All poets must write of the birds who write of " Nature," and all must be moved by the beauty of many of them, their colours, their easy flight, their lightness and softness, the grace and whimsicality of their ways. Yet more than that is found in them. Above most living things man has found them, in certain regards, emblematic of his own state. In the first of all the poems in this book, that moving anecdote*

*of the Northumbrian court which, in prose, has been the first literature to move the hearts of many children in the way that poetry moves hearts, the passage of a sparrow is seen to symbolize man's transience, his journey from unknown to unknown. To watch birds passing, and especially a solitary bird, is to feel a vague emotion springing from a likeness to something in our own lives, and the words that result will depend upon the philosophy, permanent or not, of the man who utters them. From Sydney Dobell, watching the swallow flying overseas, came the cry, "Swallow, I also seek and do not find"; in Bryant, with a firmer faith, a similar sight led to the reflection*

*"There is a Power whose care  
Teaches thy way along that pathless coast."*

*Man finds in the flight of a wild bird an emblem of his mortality; and in the caged bird he has most often found an emblem of his imprisonment by evil circumstance, the vanity of beating the bars, the sad alternative of a living death, the other sad alternative of a dull resignation, the rare resort of a brave and joyous triumph over captivity. Their lives, their wings, their familiar experience, under our eyes, of our own joys and adversities, winter and summer, plenty and penury, sun and rain, mating, parenthood and death, give them an intimate relation with us. To Blake they seemed almost a more innocent kind of human spirits, by virtue of the image of the domestic and thankful lives they lead, the swiftness and vivacity of their joys. But to most poets and to mankind at large they are chiefly and most often brought near to*

ourselves not by their physical loveliness, their breasts and wings, nor by their social existence, but by a faculty and a love which they share with us alone.

The most intimate link between birds and poets, between birds and men, the chief cause of the voluminousness of this anthology, is to be found in the second of the quotations with which Mr. Massingham graces his styleaf: "Music . . . an art common to men and birds." Nature is full of voices: but whatever predilection the modernist musician may have in favour of the nocturnal cat, it will scarcely be disputed by anyone that the birds as musicians are in a class apart, for number, ubiquity, sweetness, and range. With every dawn "the innumerable choir of day" breaks into song. We, in England, are so accustomed to the birds that it is by their absence that we are best able to define a profound silence.

*"The sedge is withered by the lake,  
And no birds sing":*

the phrase of itself produces an atmosphere to us strange and abnormal, and in one form or another it has been used a thousand times. Everywhere, at all seasons, they are around us; the down is very lonely and the marsh very desolate which harbours no bird that sings, and in our habitual fields and lanes and gardens the twittering is so continuous that we notice it most when it stops, when a hush falls with excessive heat or the approach of thunder. They are always ready for us, whatever our mood; and whatever our mood, it is not unnatural that we should link it to their music, finding it either a vicarious song expressing our mood, or, more bitterly,

an alien rejoicing indifferent to it. The latter experience is much the rarer; where the music of the birds is referred to in the present collection there is seldom the note of "How can you sing, you bonny bird?" The birds are sympathetic; if they carry messages their messages are like that of Milton's nightingale, "Thou with fresh hope the lover's heart dost fill"; they are a choir in the cathedral of heaven expressing their joy and (as man cannot but feel) gratitude on his behalf as well as their own, for the perennial blessings of life, for mere living itself, for love, for spring and the end of winter, for morning and the retreat of night. The mystic in exaltation will at times hear the song of worship from all animate and all inanimate nature. The Psalmist knew that truth; it is magnificently recorded in the Song to David and in Mr. Hodgson's Song of Honour; it is characteristically phrased in Vaughan's "Yet stones are deep in admiration," and "hills and valleys into singing break"; it is stated with charming simplicity in the seventeenth-century Hymn of John Hall:

"Yet do the lazy snails no less  
The greatness of our Lord confess.  
Their ruder voices do as well,  
Yes, and the speechless fishes tell."

Yet Hall has to remind himself of this truth. He is rationalizing from the memory of a rare experience, and it is from the obvious, the undeniable, the everyday "happy choristers of air" that he has to start, those whose song the physical ear never allows us to

forget. It is in David ap Gwylm's beautiful poem that their song is compared to a Mass ; and the thought recurs through all our poetry. In the far trills of the lark, in the throbbing of the thrush's throat, we see a spring of joy and gratitude more pure, more certain and spontaneous and courageous, than anything that comes, except at rare moments, from a race looking before and after, and consciously "clutching the inviolable shade." The moments would be rarer still were the birds not there for companionship and example ; many of our most joyous bursts of song have been directly inspired by them.

These will be found in the following pages, which I now commend to the reader. It would hardly become me further to praise Mr. Massingham's anthology ; I hope I shan't be found to have buried it. I can only add that his qualification for the work was a double one, for he has, as prime mover in the recent Plumage Act, done more than any other man to help to retain on this earth many rare and beautiful birds which were in danger of extinction at the hands of those who, as Mr. Hodgson points out, cannot bear to see pretty and saleable things running to waste in woods and fields.

J. C. SQUIRE.

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## INTRODUCTION

SOME words are necessary to explain the scope and method of this collection. I do not profess to be one of those compilers who apologise for their wares on the ground that there are too many of them. Why add another, then, is the answer for a gift. Neither do I share the minority prejudice against anthologies as such. They may be good or bad, useful or worthless, but to condemn them for being what they are seems to me a form of literary snobbery. Apart from the question of relative merit—and to make a really good anthology is a much harder job than the writing of many “original” works—I can see only one serious objection to them. They may influence their readers against going to the originals from which the selections are taken and so encourage a light-minded and surface culture. But the blame is surely the readers’, for the proper anthology should open rather than shut the door to the strong-room of the bank of literature by exhibiting some handfuls of its best money. Granted all the shoddy, a competent anthology seems to me of real value in inspiring and diffusing a taste for and knowledge of literature, which education lacks and needs more than anything else.

The object of this one is also to foster what I believe is a native and growing appreciation of natural life and beauty, which will in time rout the huge vested interests in destruction of life for frivolous purposes, from the egger to the milliner. Not the least of my difficulties has been to keep the balance between the two demands. But as bad poetry means bad thinking, and bad thinking bad feeling, I have given priority to the first and omitted the incredible amount of inferior verse which takes birds as its subject matter. My publisher never suggested a wiser thing than that I should keep the book within the limits of two

hundred poems, and I do not believe that beyond its frontier there exist more than a very few tolerable ones in the whole language. If so, I have missed them. I do not of course pretend that all of these collected here are of first-class quality, but I do claim that they take poetic honours of some kind, so far as I am a judge of them. I have also tried to keep an eye to their being as representative as possible of the several ages in which they were written, and so of the different stages the poetic mind has passed in its emotional response to nature. The reasons for my chronological arrangement of the text I propose to give later, as they embrace an interesting problem. The poems are grouped into four divisions, the first containing those written between the Middle Ages and the Restoration ; the second during the eighteenth century ; the third (beginning with Blake) representing dead writers beyond it; and the fourth living writers. The text, I think, shows that these divisions are not arbitrary. So far as one can fix their period, the few anonymous poems are placed at the end of the divisions to which they belong ; and within these categories I have ranged the poets, not alphabetically, which would have meant a fourfold repetition, but in the sequence of their dates. Living writers are not dated.

There would certainly have been no excuse for this particular miscellany, had it been anticipated by a similar work. The only two other books I have been able to find which have collected poetic material about birds are Noel Paton's *The Birds and the Bards* (1894) and the American naturalist Phil. Robinson's *The Poet's Birds* (1883). They are constructed on an entirely different plan from this volume. Neither of them are anthologies at all as I conceive the term. The former gathers an enormous number of extracts in verse relating to birds, many of them of four lines each

or fewer and from a limited number of poets. It is, in fact, a dictionary of reference and serves an excellent purpose thus. The latter consists of similar extracts mostly of descriptive verse, arranged under separate species of birds with prose commentaries attached; and is a compound of essays and quotation or commonplace book. It is natural, therefore, that only a score or so of the poems in this volume should also appear in theirs, because I have pursued one method—that of the anthology—and they two others. The scraps, gobbets, and dribblets proper to their types of publication would be fatal to this one. That, however, does not appear to me an argument against the use of extracts altogether. So ascetic an extreme, at any rate, is not for me, and I do not see how an anthology of broad range on a particular subject can possibly be compiled without them. But I have been careful to give whole poems wherever their nature admits it, and to try to avoid that effect of scrappiness and poem-chopping suitable to a calendar but not an anthology. The notes indicate when and where portions of a poem are used.

A few other points need to be noted. I have been to standard modern or reliable old editions for the text, whose spelling I have modernised, except in the few cases (Chaucer's, for instance) where the ancient spelling affects the metrical stress and movement of the verse. Scottish and dialect spelling is retained. My principle of selection has been as free and broad as I could make it within welcome limits, but I have restrained myself without difficulty from drawing upon the dicky-bird element in verse. The question, "What is a bird-poem?" often bothered me, and I have been very sparing in picking out poems like Poe's "Raven," Darley's "Phoenix," Cowper's "Nightingale and Glow-worm," where the answer is too ambiguous.

A very few samples of the fabular type do no harm, if they are good. A poem like Scott's "Proud Maisie is in the Wood" seems to me to be quite as definitely not a bird-poem as "The Trossachs" is one, but with the best will in the world I am sure to have made mistakes both of exclusion and admission in this dubious region. At a rough guess, eighty or so poems out of two hundred are quite new to the modern anthology, but if some readers look for and fail to find any specimens from the work of Quarles, R. Niccols ("The Cuckow," 1607), Allan Ramsay, Montgomery ("Pelican Island"), Leyden ("Scenes of Infancy"), Somerville, Bloomfield, Mackay, King, Cunningham, Mallet ("Amyntor"), Hogg, Faber, Fenton, Mrs. Hemans, Barry Cornwall, Charlotte Smith, and other writers on birds,\* the reason is because quite honestly I did not think any of it good enough. The point I wish to make is that, whatever the misfires, faultiness, and limitations of my selection—and of errors in fact and theory it is no doubt full enough—it has not been made without method or principle.

The notes at the end of the book are of two kinds—bibliographical and explanatory, and critical and general. The former are a necessary supplement to any well-conducted text; the latter, written at my own pleasure, interest, and risk, can be ignored by anyone who does not like or approve of them.

. . . . .

Poetry is essentially ideal. Imitation of nature as an end and for its own sake is the death of all art. The first and last law of poetry, an element which absorbs and

\* See the end of the Notes for an explanation of a poem of Smart's not being in the text.

transforms every other element upon which it works into something new, is to be true to itself.

It is an axiom that evolution works by a slow integration of all things, not in spite of but through their distinctness and particularity, and this maxim can, I think, be applied to the relations of poetry to nature and is the reason for the chronological arrangement of this book. Man's perception of beauty in nature is vastly older than his discovery of metals, older than his very speech, and the first articulate word from his lisplings was beauty. Coleridge neither saw the landscape of the "Ancient Mariner" nor got it out of a book, for Shelvocke's "Voyages" is a sunless sea indeed. It was etched upon his mind by intuitive memory, mysteriously quickened in all true poetic natures, just as the essential form of the charging mammoth sprang from the dripping walls of the sepulchral limestone grotto at the will of a hand with no living model before it. How richly revealing, indeed, of man's foster-childhood to nature for tens of thousands of years are those polychromatic mural frescoes of the unstoried Cro-Magnon race! The sense of beauty, of that *n*th power in nature all her great artists glorify, is an inheritance so fundamental to us that it is in the marrow of our bones and the pigment of our blood. Who knows what Coleridge (to go still farther back) did not owe to the lemurine anthropoid creeping among the tree-tops and receiving through the cracks of his shut mind the light capering among the leaves? Nature's beauty is an instinctive patrimony to man born of nature; and to acknowledge that gift in a thousand different ways and through a hundred different materials revealing the Creator in the creature, is the function of art. A deepening and expanding sense of beauty, the climbing of a hill only to see a mountain beyond

it, is part of our evolution, the most important part, and every artist who creates beauty is going back to nature, whether he knows it or not.

“Nature-poetry” is the explicit recognition of this legacy. There are colours in the spectrum imperceptible to the human eye, but visible to the super-eye. The mission of the artist is to see things that do not meet the eye, and his perceptions are intuitive. But what is the food of the poetic imagination? Knowledge. Love and blindness often go together both in fable and in fact, but it may be questioned whether knowledge is not love’s truer mate, and whether they do not lend to each other a power lacking to either in separation, but received back in greater measure through their union. God, we may say, brooded over chaos in the mystical perception of love, knowledge, and imagination, three in one and one in three, seeing them return to him again in the goal won, the end achieved of evolution.

We \* have in fact to look at nature-poetry in two ways: as a work of art, a thing in itself, and relatively to the age and status of discovery in which it was written. What was right for the Elizabethans is wrong for us, because our modern life has won new attitudes to and knowledge from nature to them unknown except in uncertain gleams. It is not that we find disharmonies among the Elizabethans and still earlier poets, and that their expression of values is wrong because it is different from ours. In the seventeenth century, the mind often robs the senses; in the Renaissance proper, fancy takes conventional liberties with matter and experience, and arranges them in formal patterns. Nature was a kind of Clarkson to the Eliza-

\* *Note.*—Any reader who objects to being made an accomplice in these views by the use of the plural pronoun has only to substitute “I” for “we.”

bethans, and a limited type of costume was *de rigueur*. We should be wrong to find fault with them on that account, since the convention was well and truly adapted to the needs and resources of the period, and in its own place evokes the full chords of beauty. The nature-poetry of the Middle Ages, again, partly shows us the later method in the making (in the convention of May-Day, for instance), and partly something set apart and peculiar to their own special and more concrete genius. Nature is delightfully humanised, as religion was, and beasts and birds and saints and angels and devils play a united part in the theatre of human destiny. The funeral service of the birds in Skelton's exquisite "Boke of Philip Sparow" is as beautiful and natural as are beasts and birds acting their own lives in the drama of creation. The eighteenth-century pastoralists, again, break fresh ground; their method, or rather system, is what science calls a "mutation" towards the objective and descriptive treatment of nature, and in the hands of Thomson and Cowper the new instrument yielded its full volume of sound. But Thomson, the centre of the new movement, is at the same time its worst enemy. Poetry is always breaking into and out of his set numbers, just as the robins hop in and out of the glass house at Kew and thrill the academy of alien growths with their native warble.

With the nineteenth century, launched by Blake and Burns, that intuitive memory, implanted by nature, seemed to become self-conscious and aware of its source, and the spiral of evolution took a new turn. Its first glory has as good a name in the Realistic as in the Romantic Revival, for a leap forward in poetic power and range of vision corresponded with a more intimate perception of natural truth. Roughly, the age began to see things in and for themselves, to realise an immortal aspect of beauty behind them, and to

gain a new reverence for life as it acquired a truer knowledge of it. Poetry became both more particular and more integral, and it was natural that this modern turn, with its more and more sympathetic understanding of the nature of things, should be shot through with portents of Darwinism, which demonstrates the growth of integration and differentiation in the natural world. The bond between nature and the soul of man was recognised, and Coleridge defines beauty in the abstract as "the unity of the manifold, the coalescence of the diverse." The age of unity in nature-poetry had dawned, and it sought balances and reconciliations in every direction, with "truth to nature," with "humanitarianism," with knowledge, and with the spirit of nature urging its manifold forms into life.

"Truth to nature," therefore, has become very wide in meaning. Professor Thomson says of the nature-poets that they are "the truest because deepest biologists of us all"—that is one truth, to penetrate matter and read the Sibyl's mysteries. Another, surely, is some knowledge by sense or intuition of the external processes of nature, as a key to nature's language, a passage between it and the soul of man, a treasure-house of imagery and illustration and a parable of effortless expression. Many artists fight shy of this knowledge as impeding their freedom. But the genuine artist turns all to good, and to make bread grinds all that he can gather into his mill. New knowledge is new words, new colours, new thoughts, new beauties to him. When Wordsworth makes an analogy like "more dreary cold than a forsaken bird's nest filled with snow," he makes a particular use of natural life which keeps the balance between truth to nature and truth to art and explores a *terra nova*, reached by knowledge and observation, whose possibilities for poetic simile and image are incomparably

richer than any to be got out of fable, legend, myth, or picturesque convention. When Whitman swells the song-sparrow's voice of hunger and loss into a symphony, and on Paumanok's shore break the waves of all human sorrow, he is transcending, not violating, reality. When Francis Thompson writes :

" Earth ere blossoming  
thrills  
With far daffodils  
And feels her breast turn sweet  
With the unconceivèd wheat,"

we are gainers by the twin realities of truth and beauty. No true artist of the human figure fears to be choked by a knowledge of anatomy.

When, therefore, the modern nature-poet makes a division between natural truth, visible or invisible, and poetic beauty, we are right not to be taken in by his music. We accept Lyly's "What bird so sings, yet so doth wail? O 'tis the ravished nightingale"; we qualify our acceptance of Arnold's "Philomela" by referring the meaningless conceit to Coleridge's proper reproach to the poets ("The Nightingale") who "heave their sighs o'er Philomela's pity-pleading strains" and harness nature to the water-cart. "The moping owl doth to the moon complain" very effectively in the blanched vales of Arcady, but the modern poet who murmurs to us of "the cruel lion," "the kind antelope," "the warbling sea-mew," "the faithful dove," the skylark "shrilling *her* immortal strains," etc., had better go there. In such nature-poetry there is no more poetry than nature; it is professionalism, exploiting stale odds and ends to poetic copy, and the product not of reality and imagination but of false sentiment. How different when Father Hopkins, who can

hardly be described as an expert ornithologist, writes in "The Cuckoo"—"The whole landscape flushes on a sudden at a sound." He knew. The objection to this divorce from reality is threefold. It fails to adapt itself to the material and conditions of its own age, and poetry cannot stand out of time without using time's tools; it creates artificially a disunion between the specialist feeding on pure data and the poet on pure emotion, and it lacks the balance between the mind and the senses, between truth to nature and truth to art which modern nature-poetry at its best seeks as intuitively as the real poetic dramatist seeks a balance between natural speech and poetic diction. And how dulled to the masterly self-expression of nature herself, its great preceptor! "The rise, the progress, the setting of imagery," writes Keats in a letter to Taylor, "should like the sun come natural to him (the poet)—shine over him and set soberly although in magnificence leaving him in the luxury of twilight . . . and if poetry comes not as naturally as the leaves to a tree, it had better not come at all."\*

It can be fairly claimed that this little world of poems about birds is a globe reflecting these larger movements and currents more graciously and compactly than a more ambitious volume could accomplish. Birds enter into nature like stars into the sky, quickening her pulse and revealing the graces of her spirit. Without them her blood runs too cold for sun or central fires to warm it. They were a sudden, bright thought of hers, run into rhyme, and ever after have been the expression of her lyrical power, easing

\* *Note.*—To treat a particular type of poetry historically and in relation to the facts of nature is not, I think, to question the validity of Mr. Clutton Brock's definition of art as the communication of emotional values experienced by the artist. (See his profound study of Hamlet. Methuen, 1922.)

with laughter and at the same time articulating after long travail those mighty impulses of life, love, death, and birth whose purposes she broods. How naturally, then, do these living songs lend wings and voices to the poets, reaching up to where :

“ The gods embrace  
And stars are born and suns : . . .  
. . . where life and death are one ”—

and catching in the curves, eddies, circles, sweeps of music and flight the tumults of the human heart. Among living poets we are more conscious of this sense of identity, of a passion to embrace and interpret the beauty of life through its least earthly visible form than ever before ; and in Mr. Hardy, Mr. Hodgson (“ The Song of Honour,” the greatest expression of this modern spirit we have among living poets) and Mr. Stephens particularly a new harmony of love, knowledge, and imaginative truth emerges. These three graces have joined hands partly out of a common sense of loss, for it seems impossible for the human mind to measure the value and wonder of creation until it knows it to be perishing. Bird-life is ebbing and the world is not what it was when older poets sang it ; we are in the autumn of that former bounty, and the manuscript comes into our hands with few of its pages not torn, missing, or scribbled over. Of that vandalism Mr. Hodgson’s “ To Deck a Woman ” (never published in book form) is the immortal witness and accuser :

“ One melody, one lustre lost,  
One loveliness of Earth at end—  
Not Heaven deflowered of all its host  
Were deeper wound or worse to mend.

“ I saw the wood in sweet and stale,  
The shock and slow and heavy crown,  
The milks and wines come full and fail,  
The glory dashed and all hung down.

" The taloned winds, the clash and fall,  
 The shadow of the winter cloud ;  
 I saw the wood—I saw it all,  
 The revelation and the shroud.

" For thee \* he dragged his shambles through  
 The forests of my burning land,  
 In my insulted snows I knew  
 A labour of thy privy hand.

" And when the sedge stole back and through  
 Its beaded waters rainbow-shot,  
 And suns burned whole and bled anew,  
 I sought my birds and found them not." †

The " Song of Honour " and this funeral ode over nature's dying fires yet kindle a radiant promise for the future of poetry. The modern artist begins to feel the need of a reconciliation between the arts and science (the raw material of art), whose opposition is as much taken for granted in this generation as was that between science and religion in the sixties of last century. He sees the limitations of interpreting nature without knowledge, whether intuitive or acquired, of her processes, methods, ends, or workmanship, equally with those of the man of science " anatomising " her without the emotional insight which relates the part to a harmonious whole. In the divine sympathy with and understanding of the nature of things, poetry, not science, shall have the last word.

I have tended perhaps to explain and lay out the contents of this book on the analogy of an evolutionary diagram. The parallel is to some extent a just one. Each age comes to its perfect flower in certain poems, dies right out and leaves no successors. But the main phylum of progress,

\* Thee—viz. women.

† The author's anxiety to retouch and recast this remarkable poem before its appearance in book form has prevented me from including it here.

throwing out these branches on its course, runs steadily onwards, and it is possible to pick out those poems which, written at widely separated intervals of time, yet own a roughly common kinship in idea and feeling. They are prophetic, as poetry so often is, of the modern attitude to nature. In the fourteenth century, there are David ap Gwylm's rapturous "Mass of the Birds" and Chaucer's constant touches of familiarity and quicksightedness, slipping free of convention; at the Renaissance, Drummond's "Sweet Bird, that sing'st away the early hours" looks beyond the bowers of charmed seclusion. In the seventeenth century, Vaughan's "The Bird," Hall's "A Pastoral Hymn," Cary's "Hymn," and Marvell's seeing lines from "Appleton House":

"And through the hazels thick espy  
The hatching throstle's shining eye,"

view nature closely and with that almost startled gaze of discovery and recognition which is so touching. Pope, Cowper, Thomson, and Burns in the eighteenth century swung away from the anthropocentric obsession and gave "Sensibility" a truer grace than its professional antics promised, while the genius of Burns enters into the life of all wild things so feelingly that his numbers thrill with bird-voices for the first time in our literature. And finally, Blake sings like Francis Thompson's "Mistress of Vision," and in four lines utters the parable of the whole of this miscellany:

"He who bends to himself a joy  
Doth the wingèd life destroy;  
But he who catches the joy as it flies  
Lives in Eternity's sunrise."

In bulk, my obligations for the use of copyright poems are not nearly so back-breaking as I not only could have

wished, but as I took a deal of trouble to burden myself with. The seeker, for instance, will not find Mr. De la Mare represented here, whose often "wonderful, wonderful voices" possess the very cadence of the not human, not angelic (but something less and more than both) song of the wild bird. To play the stern naturalist is no compensation for the loss of them. From "The Linnet" ("Motley," 1918), he might argue that the sacrifice of truth to rhyme (the song is "hers"—to rhyme with "furze") took a leaf out of the poet's laurels. Could I have secured a song which does for this bird what Burns (with equal inaccuracy) does for the woodlark, I should have been thankful, regardless of sex-problems, both for the linnet-poet and the poet's linnet. The absence of Edward Thomas makes another hole in the book. His poems on birds are rather individual jottings from an intimate diary of the mind, touching gracious and unsuspected objects of poetic experience, than strict bird-poems. But through them and Thomas's faint, fragrant indeterminacy of feeling, we gain a new insight into the shy, kindred qualities of bird-life. Meredith's "The Lark Ascending"; Mr. Masfield's masculine "Sea Change" from "Salt-Water Ballads"; five of Dr. Bridges', particularly his matchless "Nightingales"; one of Father Hopkins's, which he himself calls "the best thing I ever wrote"; Dowden's charming "In the Cathedral Close"; Watts-Dunton's "Mother Carey's Chicken," a good example of the "humanitarian" poem, unspoiled by weakness, vagueness, or gush; Michael Field's "Birds in an Autumn Sky"; and several more by other living or dead (but alive in copyright as well as beauty) writers—are further serious losses. A limited expenditure only on copyright fees was available, so that I had not only to keep an eye for cheapness in purchase as well as

merit in poetry in my choice of other poets within copyright, but to be very sparing in what I drew from them. The forbidden fruit here are poems by Mr. Hodgson, Mr. Stephens, Mr. Davies, Mr. Hardy, Francis Ledwidge, Mr. Martin Armstrong ("The Thrush"), and others. I am in no way reflecting upon the copyright law in making a necessary explanation of certain modern omissions in the book, and I am bound to say that nearly all the authors whom I approached, whether known or unknown to me personally, did everything they possibly could to help me.

The acknowledgments I have to make, if not so numerous as I had hoped, are the more heartily tendered on that account. Through the authors and publishers to be named, moreover, the continuity and, I hope, representative character of the book has been just preserved up to the present day. I am particularly indebted to Mr. Wilfred Meynell for allowing me to use Francis Thompson's "The Question," six poems by John Banister Tabb, and Mrs. Meynell's "In Early Spring," from *Poems* (1913); to Mr. Edmund Blunden for giving me free use of his text of John Clare and sending me an unpublished poem of his own; to Mr. Thomas Hardy for three of his finest poems; to the editor of the *Nation* and Mr. Holbrook Jackson for Mr. Hodgson's unpublished "Hymn to Moloch"; to Messrs. Macmillan for the same poet's "Stupidity Street" and an extract from "The Song of Honour," from *Poems* (1917), and Mr. Hardy's "The Blinded Bird"; to Mr. J. C. Squire for his long and freely tendered "The Birds"; to Lady Grey of Falloden for a poem from "Windlestraw"; to Messrs. Longmans, Green & Co. for extracts from Jean Ingelow's "Honours" and "Songs of Seven"; to the Earl of Lytton for a piece from "Owen Meredith's" *Fables in Song*; to Mrs. F. W. Bourdillon for two poems by F. W. Bourdillon; to Mrs. Sylvia Lynd for

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I am also happy to express my obligations for obtaining the right to use certain poems for half of the usual or a small or a reduced fee—to Messrs. Allen & Unwin for Mr. Hodgson's "The Missel Thrush" from *The Last Blackbird* (1907); to Lord Dunsany for Francis Ledwidge's "To a Linnet in a Cage" from *Songs of the Fields* and "The Sparrow" from *Last Songs*; to Mr. Harold Monro for T. P. Cameron Wilson's "Magpies in Picardy"; to Mr. Gerard Hopkins and Mr. Milford for "The Woodlark" of Father Hopkins's; to Mr. Jonathan Cape for Mr. W. H. Davies's "Day's Black Star" from his *Collected Poems*; to Messrs. Macmillan for Mr. James Stephens's "Song" (shortened) from *The Hill of Vision* and "The Fifteen Acres" from *The Adventures of Seumas Beg*; to Mr. Elkin Mathews for J. E. Flecker's "Tenebris Interlucentem" from *The Bridge of Fire*; and to Mr. Martin Secker for Mr. Martin Armstrong's "The Buzzards" from the volume of that name. I have to give my warm thanks to Mr. Stephens, Mr. Davies, and Mr. Armstrong for their ready help and permission. I must apologise to anyone whose rights I may have quite inadvertently overlooked.

What I owe to Mr. Squire, who has written a Preface, and two other friends, who have helped me in various ways in compiling this volume, cannot be expressed—one has hunted me out three or four very rare poems and given me inexhaustible good counsel. Without the aid, the discoveries, the critical penetration, the soundness of judgment and fertility of suggestion of the third, it is certain I could not have completed the book.

FROM THE MIDDLE AGES  
TO  
THE RESTORATION



THE VENERABLE BEDE

(673-735)

I

*SPARROWS AND MEN \**

MAN's life is like a Sparrow, mighty King !  
That, stealing in, while by the fire you sit  
Housed with rejoicing friends, is seen to flit  
Safe from the storm, in comfort tarrying.  
Here did it enter—there, on hasty wing  
Flies out, and passes on from cold to cold ;  
But whence it came we know not, nor behold  
Whither it goes. E'en such that transient Thing,  
The human Soul ; not utterly unknown  
While in the Body lodged, her warm abode :—  
But from what world She came, what woe or weal  
On her departure waits, no tongue hath shewn :  
This mystery if the Stranger can reveal,  
His be a welcome cordially bestowed !

DAVID AP GWYLYM  
(14th Century)

11

*THE MASS OF THE BIRDS \**

THIS morning, lying couched amid the grass  
In the deep deep dingle south of Llangwyth's Pass,  
While it was yet neither quite bright nor dark,  
I heard a new and wonderful High Mass.

The Chief Priest was the nightingale: the lark  
And thrush assisted him: and some small bird  
(I do not weet his name) (1) acted as clerk.  
My spirit was lapt in ecstasy: each word,  
Word after word, thrilled through me like the deep  
Rich music of a dream: not wholly asleep  
Nor all awake was I, but, as it were,  
Tranced somewhere between one state and the other.  
All heavy thoughts that through the long day smother  
Man's heart and soul with weariness and care  
Were gone, and in their place reigned pure delight.  
The nightingale, sent from a far and bright  
Land by my golden sister,(2) prophesied  
Of blessèd days to come, in a sweet voice:  
And the small bird, responding, sang " Rejoice!

Rejoice!"

I heard his little bill tinkle and jingle  
With a clear silver sound that filled the dingle.  
Heaven is a state wherein bliss and devotion mingle.  
And such was mine this morn: I could have died  
Of rapture. Never knelt upon his hassock  
Bishop or deacon with a holier feeling.  
How beautifully shone the thrush's cassock  
Covered all over with a thousand strange  
And lovely flowers, like those upon an Arabesque ceiling!

The altar seemed of such resplendent gold  
As no man, even a miser, would exchange  
For all the jewels in the East of old.  
Two hours I lay admiring all I saw,  
Yet those two hours appeared to me no more  
Than as a moment : I look back with awe  
And wonder at what then I thought and felt,  
And would give all my fame and all my lore,  
Yea, even almost my life, but to restore  
The rapturous emotions that then dwelt  
Within my bosom. Ah ! this may not be—  
But glory unto God, who in his infinite love  
Created man to enjoy to eternity  
Even greater happiness in his own Heaven above !

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

(1340-1400 ?)

III

*THE BRIDDES IN MAY* \*

THE briddes that han left hir song,  
 Whyl they han suffred cold so strong  
 In wedres grille, and derk to sighte,  
 Ben in May, for the sonne brighte,  
 So glade, that they shewe in singing,  
 That in hir herte is swich lyking,  
 That they mote singen and he light.  
 Then doth the nightingale hir might  
 To make noyse, and singen blythe.  
 Then is blisful, many a sythe,  
 The chelaundre <sup>(1)</sup> and the papingay.<sup>(2)</sup>  
 Then yonge folk entenden ay  
 For to ben gay and amorous,  
 The tyme is then so savorous.  
 Hard is his herte that loveth nought  
 In May, when al this mirth is wrought ;  
 When he may on these braunches here  
 The smale briddes singen clere  
 Hir blisful swete song pitous.

. . . . .

For out of toun me list to gon  
 The sowne of briddes for to here,  
 That on these bussches singen clere.  
 And in the swete sesoun that leef is,  
 With a threde basting my slevis,  
 Aloon I wente in my playing,  
 The smale foules song harkning ;  
 That peyned hem ful many a payre  
 To singe on bowes blosmed fayre.

*SEYNT VALENTYNES DAY\**

THER mighte men the royal egle finde,  
 That with his sharpe look perceth the sonne ;  
 And other egles of a lower kinde,  
 Of which that clerkes wel devysen conne.<sup>(1)</sup>  
 Ther was the tyraunt with his fethres donne  
 And greye, I mene the goshauk, that doth pyne <sup>(2)</sup>  
 To briddes for his outrageous ravyne.

The gentil faucon,<sup>(3)</sup> that with his feet distreyneth  
 The kinges hond ; the hardy sperhawk eke,<sup>(4)</sup>  
 The quayles foo ; the merlion <sup>(5)</sup> that peyneth  
 Him-self ful ofte, the larke for to seke ;  
 Ther was the douve, with hir eyen meke ;  
 The jalous swan, ayens his deth that singeth ;  
 The oule eke, that of dethe the bode bringeth ;

The crane the geaunt,<sup>(6)</sup> with his trompes sounne ;  
 The thief, the chogh ; and eke the jangling pye ;  
 The scorning jay ; the eles foo, the heroune ;  
 The false lapwing,<sup>(7)</sup> ful of treacherye ;  
 The stare,<sup>(8)</sup> that the counseyl can bewrye ;  
 The tame ruddok,<sup>(9)</sup> and the coward kyte ;  
 The cok, that orloge is of thorpes <sup>(10)</sup> lyte ;

The sparrow, Venus sone ; the nightingale,  
 That clepeth <sup>(11)</sup> forth the fresshe leves newe ;  
 The swallow, mordrer of the flies smale <sup>(12)</sup>  
 That maken hony of floures fresshe of hewe ;  
 The wedded turtel, with hir herte trewe ;  
 The peacock, with his aungels fethres brighte ;  
 The fesaunt, scorne of the cok by nighte ;

The waker goos ; the cukkow ever unkinde ;  
The papingay, ful of delicasye ;  
The drake, stroyer of his owne kinde ;  
The stork, the wreker of avouterye <sup>(13)</sup> ;  
The hote cormeraunt of glotonye ;  
The raven wys, the crow with vois of care ;  
The throstel olde ; the frosty feldefare.

What shulde I seyn ? of foules every kinde  
That in this worlde han fethres and stature,  
Men mighten in that place assembled finde  
Before the noble goddessse Nature.  
And everich of hem did his besy cure  
Benignely to chese or for to take,  
By hir accord, his formel or his make.<sup>(14)</sup>

## v

## THE ROUNDEL OF THE SMALE FOULES\*

Now welcom somer, with thy sonne softe,  
That hast this wintres weders over-shake,  
And driven away the longe nightes blake !

Seynt Valentyne, that art ful hy on lofte ;—  
Thus singen smale foules for thy sake—

*Now welcom somer, with thy sonne softe,  
That hast this wintres weders over-shake,  
And driven away the longe nightes blake !*

Wel han they cause for to gladen ofte,  
Sith ech of hem recovered hath his make (1) ;  
Ful blisful may they singen when they wake ;

*Now welcom somer, with thy sonne softe,  
That hast this wintres weders over-shake,  
And driven away the longe nightes blake !*

*THE CAGE* \*

TAK any brid, and put it in a cage,  
And do al thyn entente, and thy corage  
To fostre it tendrely with mete and drinke,  
Of alle deyntees that thou canst bithinke,  
And kepe it al so clenly as thou may ;  
Al-though his cage of gold be never so gay,  
Yet hath this brid, by twenty thousand fold,  
Lever in a forest, that is rude and cold,  
Gon ete wormes and swich wretchednesse.  
For ever this brid wol doon his businesse  
To escape out of his cage, if he may :  
His liberty this brid desireth ay.

JAMES I OF SCOTLAND

(1394-1437)

VII

*A MAY BURDEN \**

AND on the smalle greenè twistis (<sup>1</sup>) sat  
The little sweetè nightingale, and sung  
So loud and clear the hymnès consecrat  
Of lovè's use : now soft, now loud among,  
That all the gardens and the wallès rung  
Right of their song. . . .

Worship, ye that lovers been, this May,  
For of your bliss the Kalends are begun ;  
And sing with us, " Away, winter, away !  
Come, summer, come, the sweet season and sun !  
Awake, for shame, that have your heavens won,  
And amorously lift up your headès all ;  
Thank Love, that list you to his mercy call."

When they this song had sung a little thraw,<sup>(2)</sup>  
They stent awhile, and therewith unaffrayed,  
As I beheld and cast mine eyne alaw,  
From bough to bough they hippèd, and they played,  
And freshly in their birdès kind arrayed  
Their feathers new, and fret them in the sun,  
And thankèd Love that han their matès won.

WILLIAM DUNBAR

(1460- ?)

VIII

*MIRTH OF MAY\**

RIGHT as the stern <sup>(1)</sup> of day began to shine,  
When gone to bed was Vesper and Lucine,<sup>(2)</sup>  
I rose, and by a roserie <sup>(3)</sup> did me rest ;  
Up sprang the goldin candil matutine,  
With clear depurit <sup>(4)</sup> beamis crystalline,  
Glading the mirry fowlis in their nest ;  
Or Phoebus was in purpour cape revest,  
Up rose the lark, the heavenis minstrel fine,  
In May, in till a morrow mirthfullest.

Full angelic the birdis sang their hours,  
Within their courtings' <sup>(5)</sup> green, within their bowers,  
Apparellit with white and red, with bloomis sweet ;  
Enamelit was the field with all colours,  
The pearly dropis shook in silver showers,  
While all in balm did branch & leavis fleit,<sup>(6)</sup>  
Depart fra Phoebus, did Aurora greet ;  
Her crystall tears I saw hung on the flowers,  
While he for love all drank up with his heat.

For mirth of May, with skipis & with hops,  
The birdis sang upon the tender crops,  
With curious notes, as Venus chapel-clerks.  
The roses red, now spreading of their knops,<sup>(7)</sup>  
Were powdered bricht with heavenly beryal <sup>(8)</sup> drops,  
Through beamis red, leming <sup>(9)</sup> as ruby sparkis ;  
The skyes rang for shouting of the larks,  
The purpour heaven, ourscalit <sup>(10)</sup> in silver slops,<sup>(11)</sup>  
Ourgilt the trees, branchis, leavis, and barks.

JOHN SKELTON

(1460 ?-1509)

IX

THE BOOK OF PHILIP SPARROW

WHEN I remember again  
How my Philip was slain,  
Never half the pain  
Was between you twain,  
Pyramus and Thisbe,  
As then befell to me :  
I wept and I wailed,  
The tears down hailed ;  
But nothing it availed  
To call Philip again,  
Whom Gyb our cat hath slain.

. . . . .  
*Heu, heu, me,*

That I am woe for thee !  
*Ad Dominum, cum tribularer, clamavi :*  
Of God nothing else crave I  
But Philip's soul to keep  
From the marees (1) deep  
Of Acherontes well, (1<sup>a</sup>)  
That is a flood of hell ;  
And from the great Pluto,  
The prince of endless woe ;  
And from foul Alecto,  
With visage black and blo (1<sup>b</sup>) ;  
And from Medusa, that mare, (1<sup>c</sup>)  
That like a fiend doth stare ;

. . . . .  
*Do mi nus,*

Help now, sweet Jesus !

## JOHN SKELTON

*Levavi oculos meos in montes :*  
 Would God I had Xenophontis,  
 Or Socrates the wise,  
 To show me their devise,  
 Moderately to take  
 This sorrow that I make  
 For Philip Sparrow's sake !

It had a velvet cap,  
 And would sit upon my lap,  
 And seek after small worms,  
 And sometimes white bread crumbs ;  
 And many times and oft  
 Between my breastes soft <sup>(1<sup>d</sup>)</sup>  
 It would lie and rest ;  
 It was proper and prest. <sup>(1<sup>e</sup>)</sup>  
 Sometimes he would gasp  
 When he saw a wasp ;  
 A fly or a gnat,  
 He would fly at that ;  
 And prettily he would pant  
 When he saw an ant ;  
 Lord, how he would pry  
 After the butterfly !  
 Lord, how he would hop  
 After the grasshop !  
 And when I said, Phip phip,  
 Then he would leap and skip,  
 And take me by the lip.  
 Alas, it will be slo,  
 That Philip is gone me fro !

For it would come and go,  
And fly so to and fro ;  
And on me it would leap  
When I was asleep,  
And his feathers shake  
Wherewith he would make  
Me often for to wake,  
And for to take him in  
Upon my naked skin ;  
God wot, we thought no sin :  
What though he crept so low ?  
It was no hurt, I trow,  
He did nothing, perdie,  
But sit upon my knee :  
Philip, though he were nice,<sup>(14)</sup>  
In him it was no vice ;  
Philip had leave to go  
To pick my little toe <sup>(15)</sup> ;  
Philip might be bold  
And do what he would ;  
Philip would seek and take  
All the flees blake  
That he could there espy  
With his wanton eye.

. . . . .

That vengeance I ask and cry,  
By way of exclamation,  
On all the whole nation  
Of cats wild and tame ;  
God send them sorrow and shame .  
That cat especially  
That slew so cruelly

My little pretty sparrow  
That I brought up at Carow.<sup>(2)</sup>

O cat of churlish kind,  
The fiend was in thy mind  
When thou my bird untwined ! <sup>(3)</sup>  
I would thou hadst been blind !  
The leopards savage,  
The lions in their rage,  
Might catch thee in their paws,  
And gnaw thee in their jaws !  
The serpents of Lybiey  
Might sting thee venomously !  
The dragons with their tongues  
Might poison thy liver and lungs !

. . . . .

Of India the greedy gripes <sup>(4)</sup>  
Might tear out all thy tripes !  
Of Arcady the bears  
Might pluck away thine ears !  
The wild wolf Lycaon <sup>(5)</sup>  
Bite asunder thy backbone !  
Of Etna the burning hill,  
That day and night burneth still,  
Set thy tail in a blaze,  
That all the world may gaze  
And wonder upon thee,  
From Ocean, the great sea,  
Unto the Isles of Orcady,  
From Tilbury ferry  
To the plain of Salisbury !

. . . . .

Alas I say again,  
Death hath departed (6) us twain !  
The false cat hath thee slain :  
Farewell, Philip, adieu !  
Our Lord thy soul rescue !  
Farewell without restore,  
Farewell for evermore !

. . . . .

And it were a Jew,  
It would make one rue,  
To see my sorrow new.  
These villanous false cats  
Were made for mice and rats,  
And not for birdes small.  
Alas, my face waxeth pale,  
Telling this piteous tale,  
How my bird so fair,  
That was wont to repair,  
And go in at my spare (7)  
And creep in at my gore  
Of my gown before,  
Flickering with his wings !  
Alas, my heart it stings,  
Remembering pretty things !  
Alas, mine heart it slayeth  
My Philip's doleful death.  
When I remember it,  
How prettily it would sit,  
Many times and oft,  
Upon my finger aloft !  
I played with him tittle tattle,  
And fed him with my spittle,

With his bill between my lips ;  
 It was my pretty Phips !  
 Many a pretty kiss  
 Had I of his sweet muss (8) ;  
 And now the cause is thus,  
 That he is slain me fro,  
 To my great pain and woe.

To weep with me look that ye come,  
 All manner of birds in your kind ;  
 See none be left behind.  
 To mourning look that ye fall  
 With dolorous songs funeral,  
 Some to sing, and some to say,  
 Some to weep, and some to pray,  
 Every bird in his lay.  
 The goldfinch, the wagtail ;  
 The jangling (9) jay to rail,  
 The flecked pie to chatter  
 Of this dolorous matter ;  
 And Robin Redbreast,  
 He shall be the priest  
 The requiem mass to sing,  
 Softly warbling,  
 With help of the red sparrow,(10)  
 And the chattering swallow,  
 This hearse for to hallow ;  
 The lark with his lung too ;  
 The spink,(11) and the martinet also ;  
 The shoveller with his brode beak ;  
 The doterell, that foolish peek,(12)  
 And also the mad coot,  
 With a bald face to toot (13) ;

The fieldfare, and the snite (<sup>14</sup>);  
The crow, and the kite;  
The raven, called Rolf,  
His plain-song to solf (<sup>15</sup>);  
The partridge, the quail;  
The plover with us to wail;  
The woodhack, (<sup>16</sup>) that singeth chur  
Hoarsely, as he had the mur (<sup>16a</sup>);  
The lusty chanting nightingale;  
The popinjay (<sup>17</sup>) to tell her tale,  
That toteth (<sup>18</sup>) oft in a glass,  
Shall read the Gospel at mass;  
The mavis with her whistle  
Shall read there the epistle.  
But with a large and a long  
To keep just plain song,  
Our chanters shall be the cuckoo,  
The culver, the stockdove,  
With pewit the lapwing,  
The versicles shall sing.  
The bitter with his bump, (<sup>19</sup>)  
The crane with his trump,  
The swan of Menander, (<sup>20</sup>)  
The goose and the gander,  
The duck and the drake,  
Shall watch at this wake;  
The peacock so proud,  
Because his voice is loud,  
And hath a glorious tail,  
He shall sing the grail;  
The owl, that is so foul,  
Must help us to howl;  
The heron so gaunt,

And the cormeraunt,  
 With the pheasant,  
 And the gaggling gant,<sup>(21)</sup>  
 And the churlish chough ;  
 The route and the kough <sup>(21a)</sup> ;  
 The barnacle,<sup>(22)</sup> the buzzard,  
 With the wild mallard ;  
 The divendop <sup>(23)</sup> to sleep ;  
 The waterhen to weep ;  
 The puffin and the teal  
 Money they shall deal  
 To poor folk at large ;  
 That shall be their charge ;  
 The seamew and the titmouse,  
 The woodcock with the long nose ;  
 The throstle with her warbling,<sup>(24)</sup>  
 The starling with her brabbling ;  
 The rook, with the osprey  
 That putteth fishes to a fray <sup>(25)</sup> ;  
 And the dainty curlew,  
 With the turtle most true.

. . . . .  
 But for the eagle doth fly  
 Highest in the sky,  
 He shall be the sedean <sup>(26)</sup>  
 The choir to demean,<sup>(27)</sup>  
 As provost principal,  
 To teach them their ordinal <sup>(28)</sup> ;  
 Also the noble falcon,  
 With the gerfalcon,  
 The tiercel gentil,<sup>(29)</sup>  
 They shall mourn soft and still  
 In their amise of grey ;

The sacre (<sup>30</sup>) with them shall say  
*Dirige* for Philip's soul ;  
 The goshawk shall have a role  
 The choristers to controll ;  
 The lanners and the marlions (<sup>31</sup>)  
 Shall stand in their mourning gowns ;  
 The hobby and the musket (<sup>32</sup>)  
 The censers and the cross shall fet ;  
 The kestrel in all this work  
 Shall be holy water clerk.

*Credo videre bona Domini,*  
 I pray God, Philip to heaven may fly !  
*Domini, exaudi orationem meam !*  
 To heaven he shall, from heaven he came !  
*Do mi nus vo bis cum !*  
*Deus, cui oremus proprium est miserere et parcere,*  
 On Philip's soul have pity !  
 For he was a pretty cock,  
 And came of a gentle stock,  
 And wrapt in a maiden's smock,  
 And cherished full daintily,  
 Till cruel fate made him to die :  
 Alas for doleful destiny !  
 But whereto should I  
 Longer mourn or cry ?  
 To Jupiter I call, (<sup>33</sup>)  
 Of heaven imperial,  
 That Philip may fly  
 Above the starry sky,  
 To tread the pretty wren,  
 That is Our Lady's hen :  
 Amen, amen, amen !

## GAVIN DOUGLAS

(1474-1522)

x

MAY \*

THE merle, the mavis, and the nichtingale,  
 With mirry notis mirthfully forth burst,  
 Enforcing them wha micht do clink it best :  
 The cushat croud<sup>(1)</sup> and pykkis<sup>(1<sup>a</sup>)</sup> on the rise,  
 The starling changis divers stevennis nise,<sup>(2)</sup>  
 The sparrow chirmis<sup>(3)</sup> in the wallis clift,  
 Goldspink and lintwhite<sup>(4)</sup> fordinnand the lift,<sup>(5)</sup>  
 The cuckow calis, and so whitteris<sup>(6)</sup> the quail,  
 While riveris reirdit,<sup>(6<sup>a</sup>)</sup> schawis<sup>(6<sup>b</sup>)</sup> and every dale,  
 And tender twistis<sup>(7)</sup> tremblit on the trees,  
 For birdis sang, and beming<sup>(8)</sup> of the bees,  
 In warblis dulce of heavenly armonies,  
 The larkis loud releischand<sup>(9)</sup> in the skies,  
 Louis their leige<sup>(10)</sup> with tonis curious ;  
 Both to dame Nature, and the freshe Venus,  
 Rendring high laudis in their observance,  
 Whose suggarid throatis made gladè heartis dance,  
 And all small fowlis singis on the spray ;  
 Welcome the lord of licht, and lamp of day,  
 Welcome fosterer of tender herbis green,  
 Welcome quickener of flourist flouris sheen,  
 Welcome support of every root and vein,  
 Welcome comfort of all kind fruit and grain,  
 Welcome the birdis beild<sup>(11)</sup> upon the brier,  
 Welcome master and ruler of the year,  
 Welcome welfare of husbands at the ploughs,  
 Welcome repairer of woods, trees, and boughs,  
 Welcome depainter of the bloomit meads,  
 Welcome the life of every thing that spreads,  
 Welcome storer<sup>(12)</sup> of all kind bestial,  
 Welcome be thy bricht beamis, gladdand all.

WILLIAM WAGER

(FL. 1566)

XI

*A CATCH \**

I HAVE a pretty titmouse  
Come pecking on my toe.  
Gossip, with you I purpose  
To drink before I go.  
Little pretty nightingale,  
Among the branches green,  
Give us of your Christmas ale,  
In the honour of Saint Stephen.  
Robin Redbreast with his notes  
Singing aloft in the quire,  
Warneth to get you frieze coats,  
For Winter then draweth near.  
My bridle lieth on the shelf,  
If you will have any more,  
Vouchsafe to sing it yourself,  
For here you have all my store.

SIR PHILIP SIDNEY  
(1554-1586)

XII

*THE NIGHTINGALE \**

THE nightingale, as soon as April bringeth  
Unto her rested sense a perfect waking,  
While late-bare earth, proud of new clothing, springeth,  
Sings out her woes, a thorn her song-book making ;  
And mournfully bewailing,  
Her throat in tunes expresseth  
What grief her breast oppresseth  
For Tereus' force on her chaste will prevailing.

O Philomela fair, O take some gladness  
That here is juster cause of plaintful sadness :  
Thine earth now springs, mine fadeth ;  
Thy thorn without, my thorn my heart invadeth.

Alas, she hath no other cause of anguish  
But Tereus' love, on her by strong hand wroken,  
Wherein she suffering, all her spirits languish,  
Full womanlike complains her will was broken.  
But I, who, daily craving,  
Cannot have to content me,  
Have more cause to lament me,  
Since wanting is more woe than too much having.

O Philomela fair, O take some gladness  
That here is juster cause of plaintful sadness :  
Thine earth now springs, mine fadeth ;  
Thy thorn without, my thorn my heart invadeth.

EDMUND SPENSER

(1552-1598)

XIII

FROM "PROTHALAMION"

WITH that I saw two Swans (<sup>1</sup>) of goodly hew  
Come softly swimming down along the lee ;  
Two fairer Birds I yet did never see ;  
The snow, which doth the top of Pindus strew,  
Did never whiter shew ;  
Nor Jove himself, when he a Swan would be,  
For love of Leda, whiter did appear ;  
Yet Leda was (they say) as white as he,  
Yet not so white as these, nor nothing near ;  
So purely white they were,  
That even the gentle stream, the which them bare,  
Seemed foul to them, and bade his billows spare  
To wet their silken feathers, lest they might  
Soil their fair plumes with water not so fair,  
And mar their beauties bright,  
That shone as heaven's light,  
Against their Bridal day, which was not long :  
Sweet Thames ! run softly, till I end my song.

## XIV

*FROM "EPITHALAMION" \**

HARK how the cheerfull birds do chaunt their lays  
And carol of love's praise.  
The merry lark her matins sings aloft,  
The thrush replies, the mavis descant <sup>(1)</sup> plays,  
The ousel shrills, the ruddock warbles soft,  
So goodly all agree with sweet consent,  
To this day's merriment.  
Ah, my dear love, why do ye sleep thus long,  
When meeter were that ye should now awake,  
T'await the coming of your joyous make,  
And hearken to the birds' love-learnèd song,  
The dewy leaves among?  
For they of joy and pleasance to you sing,  
That all the woods them answer and their echo ring.

THOMAS NASHE

(1567-1601)

xv

*SPRING* \*

SPRING, the sweet Spring, is the year's pleasant king ;  
Then blooms each thing, then maids dance in a ring ;  
Cold doth not sting, the pretty birds do sing,  
Cuckoo, jug-jug, pu-we, to-witta-woo !

The palm and the may make country houses gay ;  
Lambs frisk and play, the shepherds pipe all day ;  
And we hear aye birds tune this merry lay,  
Cuckoo, jug-jug, pu-we, to-witta-woo.

The fields breathe sweet, the daisies kiss our feet ;  
Young lovers meet, old wives a-sunning sit ;  
In every street these tunes our ears do greet,  
Cuckoo, jug-jug, pu-we, to-witta-woo.

Spring, the sweet Spring.

JOHN LYLY  
(1553-1606)

XVI

*SPRING'S WELCOME \**

WHAT bird so sings, yet so does wail ?  
O 'tis the ravish'd nightingale !  
*Jug, jug, jug, jug, tereu !* she cries,  
And still her woes at midnight rise.  
Brave prick-song <sup>(1)</sup> ! Who is't now we hear ?  
None but the lark so shrill and clear ;  
Now at heaven's gate she claps her wings,  
The morn not waking till she sings.  
Hark, hark, with what a pretty throat  
Poor robin redbreast tunes his note !  
Hark how the jolly cuckoos sing  
*Cuckoo !* to welcome in the spring !  
*Cuckoo !* to welcome in the spring !

ALEXANDER MONTGOMERY

(1590 ?-1610 ?)

XVII

*A BIRD COMMITTEE*

THE cushat crouds, the corbie cries,  
The cuckoo couks, the prattling pyes  
    To geck (1) there they begin ;  
The jargon of the jangling jays,  
The craiking craws and keekling kays,  
    They deave't (1<sup>a</sup>) me with their din.  
The painted pawn (2) with Argus eyes  
    Can on his May-cock call ;  
The turtle wails on withered trees,  
And Echo answers all,  
    Repeating, with greeting,  
    How fair Narcissus fell,  
    By lying and spying  
    His shadow in the well.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

(1564-1616)

XVIII

*THE OUSEL-COCK SO BLACK OF HUE \**

THE ousel-cock, so black of hue,  
    With orange-tawny bill,  
The throstle with his note so true,  
    The wren with little quill;  
The finch, the sparrow, and the lark,  
    The plain-song cuckoo gray,  
Whose note full many a man doth mark,  
    And dares not answer nay.

## XIX

*WHEN DAFFODILS BEGIN TO PEER \**

WHEN daffodils begin to peer,  
With heigh ! the doxy over the dale,  
Why, then comes in the sweet o' the year ;  
For the red blood reigns in the winter's pale.

The white sheet bleaching on the hedge,  
With heigh ! the sweet birds, O, how they sing !  
Doth set my pugging <sup>(1)</sup> tooth on edge ;  
For a quart of ale is a dish for a king.

The lark, that tirra-lirra chants,  
With heigh ! with heigh ! the thrush and the jay :  
Are summer songs for me and my aunts,  
While we lie tumbling in the hay.

xx

*SPRING AND WINTER \**

WHEN daisies pied, and violets blue,  
     And lady-smocks all silver-white  
 And cuckoo-buds of yellow hue  
     Do paint the meadows with delight,  
 The cuckoo then, on every tree,  
 Mocks married men, for thus sings he,  
     Cuckoo ;  
 Cuckoo, cuckoo,—O word of fear,  
 Unpleasing to a married ear !

When shepherds pipe on oaten straws,  
     And merry larks are ploughmen's clocks,<sup>(1)</sup>  
 When turtles tread, and rooks, and daws,  
     And maidens bleach their summer smocks,  
 The cuckoo then, on every tree, etc., etc.

When icicles hang by the wall,  
     And Dick the shepherd blows his nail,  
 And Tom bears logs into the hall,  
     And milk comes frozen home in pail,  
 When blood is nipped, and ways be foul,  
 Then nightly sings the staring owl,  
     To-whit ;  
     To-who, a merry note,  
 While greasy Joan doth keel<sup>(2)</sup> the pot.

When all around the wind doth blow,  
     And coughing drowns the parson's saw,  
 And birds sit brooding in the snow,  
     And Marian's nose looks red and raw,  
 When roasted crabs hiss in the bowl,  
     Then nightly sings the staring owl, etc., etc.

## XXI

## "WILT THOU BE GONE . . ." \*

- Jul.* WILT thou be gone ? it is not near day :  
 It was the nightingale, and not the lark,  
 That pierced the fearful hollow of thine ear ;  
 Nightly she sings on yon pomegranate tree :  
 Believe me, love, it was the nightingale.
- Rom.* It was the lark, the herald of the morn.  
 No nightingale : look, love, what envious streaks  
 Do lace the severing clouds in yonder east :  
 Night's candles are burnt out, and jocund day  
 Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain tops :  
 I must be gone and live, or stay and die.
- Jul.* Yon light is not daylight, I know it, I :  
 It is some meteor that the sun exhales,  
 To be to thee this night a torch-bearer,  
 And light thee on thy way to Mantua :  
 Therefore stay yet ; thou need'st not to be gone.
- Rom.* Let me be ta'en, let me be put to death ;  
 I am content, so thou wilt have it so.  
 I'll say yon grey is not the morning's eye,  
 'Tis but the pale reflex of Cynthia's brow ;  
 Nor that is not the lark, whose notes do beat  
 The vaulty heaven so high above our heads :  
 I have more care to stay than will to go :  
 Come, death, and welcome ! Juliet wills it so.  
 How is't, my soul ? let's talk ; it is not day.
- Jul.* It is, it is ; hie hence, be gone, away !  
 It is the lark that sings so out of tune,  
 Straining harsh discords and displeasing sharps.  
 Some say the lark makes sweet division ;

This doth not so, for she divideth us :  
Some say the lark and loathèd toad change eyes ;  
O ! now I would they had changed voices too,  
Since arm from arm that voice doth us affray,  
Hunting thee hence with hunts-up to the day.  
O ! now be gone ; more light and light it grows

*Rom.* More light and light ; more dark and dark our woe .

XXII

*THE MARTLET\**

THIS guest of summer,  
The temple-haunting martlet, does approve  
By his loved mansionry that the heaven's breath  
Smells wooingly here : no jutty, frieze,  
Buttress, nor coign of vantage, but this bird  
Hath made his pendent bed and procreant cradle :  
Where they most breed and haunt, I have observ'd  
The air is delicate.

RICHARD BARNFIELD

(1574-1627)

XXIII

*THE NIGHTINGALE* \*

As it fell upon a day  
In the merry month of May,  
Sitting in a pleasant shade  
Which a grove of myrtles made,  
Beasts did leap and birds did sing,  
Trees did grow, and plants did spring<sup>l</sup>;  
Every thing did banish moan  
Save the Nightingale alone.  
She, poor bird, as all forlorn,  
Lean'd her breast up till a thorn,  
And there sung the dolefull'st ditty  
That to hear it was great pity.  
Fie, fie, fie, now would she cry ;  
Teru, teru, by and by :  
That to hear her so complain  
Scarce I could from tears refrain ;  
For her griefs so lively shown  
Made me think upon mine own.  
Ah, thought I, thou mourn'st in vain,  
None takes pity on thy pain ;  
Senseless trees, they cannot hear thee,  
Ruthless beasts, they will not cheer thee ;  
King Pandion,<sup>(1)</sup> he is dead,  
All thy friends are lapp'd in lead ;  
All thy fellow birds do sing  
Careless of thy sorrowing ;  
Even so, poor bird, like thee  
None alive will pity me.

MICHAEL DRAYTON

(1563-1631)

XXIV

*A WARWICKSHIRE MORNING \**

WHEN Phœbus lifts his head out of the winter's wave,  
No sooner doth the earth her flowery bosom brave,  
At such time as the year brings on the pleasant spring,  
But hunts-up to the morn the feath' red sylvans sing :  
And in the lower grove, as in the rising knoll,  
Upon the highest spray of every mounting pole,  
Those quiristers are percht with many a speckled breast.  
Then from her burnished gate the goodly glitt'ring east  
Gilds every lofty top, which late the humorous night  
Bespangled had with pearl, to please the morning's sight ;  
On which the mirthful quires, with their clear open throats,  
Unto the joyful morn so strain their warbling notes,  
That hills and valleys ring, and even the echoing air  
Seems all composed of sounds, about them everywhere.  
The throstle, with shrill sharps, as purposely he sung  
T'awake the listless sun ; or chiding, that so long  
He was in coming forth, that should the thickets thrill ;  
The ousel near at hand, that hath a golden bill,  
As Nature him had markt of purpose, t' let us see  
That from all other birds his tunes should different be :  
For, with their vocal sounds they sing to pleasant May ;  
Upon his dulcet pipe (1) the merle doth only play.  
When in the lower brake, the nightingale hard by,  
In such lamenting strains the joyful hours doth ply,  
As though the other birds she to her tunes would draw.  
And but that Nature—by her all constraining law—  
Each bird to her own kind this season doth invite,  
They else, alone to hear that charmer of the night—

The more to use their ears—their voices sure would spare,  
That moduleth her notes so admirably rare,  
As man to set in parts at first had learned of her.

To Philomel the next, the linnet we prefer ;  
And by that warbling bird, the woodlark place we then,  
The red-sparrow,<sup>(2)</sup> the nope,<sup>(3)</sup> the redbreast, and the  
wren.

The yellow-pate,<sup>(4)</sup> which, though she hurt the blooming  
tree,

Yet scarce hath any bird a finer pipe than she.

And of these chanting fowls, the goldfinch not behind,  
That hath so many sorts descending from her kind.<sup>(5)</sup>

The tydy <sup>(6)</sup> for her notes as delicate as they,

The laughing hecco,<sup>(7)</sup> then the counterfeiting jay.

The softer with the shrill—some hid among the leaves,  
Some in the taller trees, some in the lower greaves—

Thus sing away the morn, until the mounting sun,

Through thick exhalèd fogs his golden head doth run,

And through the twisted tops of our close covert creeps

To kiss the gentle shade, this while that sweetly sleeps.

BEN JONSON

(1574-1637)

xxv

*NATURE'S ACCORD \**

How is't each bough a several music yields ?  
The lusty throstle, early nightingale,  
Accord in tune, though vary in their tale ;  
The chirping swallow call'd forth by the sun,  
And crested lark doth his divisions run ?  
The yellow bees the air with murmur fill,  
The finches carol, and the turtles bill ?  
Whose power is this ? what god ?

THOMAS DEKKER

(1575-1641)

xxvi

*THE MERRY MONTH OF MAY \**

O, THE month of May, the merry month of May,  
So frolic, so gay, and so green, so green, so green !  
O, and then did I unto my true love say,  
Sweet Peg, thou shalt be my Summer's Queen.

Now the nightingale, the pretty nightingale,  
The sweetest singer in all the forest quire,  
Entreats thee, sweet Peggy, to hear thy true love's tale :  
Lo, yonder she sitteth, her breast against a brier.

But O, I spy the cuckoo, the cuckoo, the cuckoo ;  
See where she sitteth ; come away, my joy :  
Come away, I prithee, I do not like the cuckoo  
Should sing where my Peggy and I kiss and toy.

O, the month of May, the merry month of May,  
So frolic, so gay, and so green, so green, so green !  
O, and then did I unto my true love say,  
Sweet Peg, thou shalt be my Summer's Queen.

WILLIAM BROWNE OF TAVISTOCK

(1588-1643)

XXVII

*THE CONCERT \**

Two nights thus pass'd : the lily-handed morn  
Saw Phœbus stealing down from Ceres' corn.  
The mounting lark (day's herald) got on wing,  
Bidding each bird choose out his bough and sing.  
The lofty treble sung the little Wren ;  
Robin the mean, that best of all loves men ;  
The Nightingale the tenor ; and the Thrush,  
The counter-tenor, sweetly in a bush ;  
And that the music might be full in parts,  
Birds from the groves flew with right willing hearts ;  
But (as it seem'd) they thought (as do the swains,  
Which tune their pipes on sack'd Hibernia's plains)  
There should some droning part be, therefore will'd  
Some bird to fly into a neighbouring field,  
In embassy unto the king of bees,  
To aid his partners on the flowers and trees ;  
Who, condescending, gladly flew along  
To bear the base to his well-tunèd song.  
The crow was willing they should be beholding  
For his deep voice, but, being hoarse with scolding,  
He thus lends aid ; upon an oak doth climb,  
And nodding with his head, so keeping time.  
O true delight, enharboursing the breasts  
Of those sweet creatures with the plumy crests !  
Had Nature unto man such simpl'esse given,  
He could, like birds, be far more near to Heaven.

WILLIAM CARTWRIGHT

(1611-1643)

XXVIII

CELIA UPON HER SPARROW \*

TELL me not of joy : there's none  
Now my little Sparrow's gone ;  
    He, just as you  
    Would toy and woo,  
He would chirp and flatter me,  
He would hang the wing awhile,  
Till at length he saw me smile  
Lord, how sullen he would be !

He would catch a crumb, and then  
Sporting let it go agen,  
    He from my lip  
    Would moisture sip ;  
He would from my trencher feed,  
Then would hop, and then would run  
And cry *Philip* when h'had done,  
O whose heart can choose but bleed ?

O how eager would he fight  
And ne'er hurt though he bite ;  
    No morn did pass  
    But on my glass  
He would sit and mark and do  
What I did, now ruffle all  
His feathers o'er, now let 'em fall  
And then straightway sleek them too.

Whence will Cupid get his darts  
Feathered now to pierce our hearts ?  
    A wound he may  
    Not Love convey,  
Now this faithful bird is gone.  
O let mournful turtles join  
With loving red-breasts, and combine  
To sing dirges o'er his stone.

WILLIAM DRUMMOND OF HAWTHORNDEN  
(1585-1649)

XXIX

*SWEET BIRD . . . \**

SWEET Bird, that sing'st away the early Hours,  
Of Winters past or coming void of care,  
Well pleasèd with delights which present are,  
Fair Seasons, budding Sprays, sweet-smelling Flowers ;  
To Rocks, to Springs, to Rills, from leafy Bowers  
Thou thy Creator's goodness dost declare,  
And what dear gifts on thee he did not spare,  
A stain to human sense in sin that lowers.  
What Soul can be so sick, which by thy songs  
(Attired in sweetness) sweetly is not driven  
Quite to forget Earth's turmoils, spights, and wrongs,  
And lift a reverend eye and thought to Heaven ?  
Sweet artless Songster, thou my mind dost raise  
To airs of Spheres, yes and to Angels' lays.

xxx

## DEAR QUIRISTER . . . \*

DEAR Quirister, who from those shadows sends  
(Ere that the blushing Dawn dare show her light)  
Such sad lamenting strains, that Night attends,  
Become all ear, Stars stay to hear thy plight.  
If one whose grief even reach of thought transcends,  
Who ne'er (not in a dream) did taste delight,  
May thee importune who like case pretends,  
And seems to joy in woe, in woe's despight,  
Tell me (so may thou Fortune milder try,  
And long long sing) for what thou thus complains ?  
Sith (Winter gone) the Sun in dappled sky  
Now smiles on Meadows, Mountains, Woods, and Plains:  
The Bird, as if my questions did her move,  
With trembling wings sobb'd forth *I love, I love.*

THOMAS HEYWOOD

(157?-1650)

XXXI

*MATIN SONG* \*

Pack, clouds, away! and welcome, day!  
With night we banish sorrow.  
Sweet air, blow soft; mount, lark, aloft  
To give my Love good-morrow!  
Wings from the wind to please her mind,  
Notes from the lark I'll borrow:  
Bird, prune thy wing, nightingale, sing!  
To give my Love good-morrow!  
To give my Love good-morrow  
Notes from them all I'll borrow.

Wake from thy nest, robin redbreast!  
Sing, birds, in every furrow!  
And from each hill let music shrill  
Give my fair Love good-morrow!  
Blackbird and thrush in every bush,  
Stare, linnet and cocksparrow,  
You pretty elves, among yourselves  
Sing my fair Love good-morrow!  
To give my Love good-morrow  
Sing, birds, in every furrow!

XXXII

*THE MESSAGE \**

YE little birds, that sit and sing  
Amidst the shady valleys,  
And see how Phillis sweetly walks  
Within her garden-alleys ;  
Go, pretty birds, about her bower ;  
Sing, pretty birds, she may not lower ;  
Ah me ! methinks I see her frown !  
Ye pretty wantons, warble.

Go, tell her through your chirping bills,  
As you by me are bidden.  
To her is only known my love,  
Which from the world is hidden.  
Go, pretty birds, and tell her so ;  
See that your notes strain not too low,  
For still, methinks, I see her frown ;  
Ye pretty wantons, warble.

Go, tune your voices' harmony,  
And sing, I am her lover ;  
Strain loud and sweet, that every note  
With sweet content may move her :  
And she that hath the sweetest voice,  
Tell her I will not change my choice  
Yet still, methinks, I see her frown !  
Ye pretty wantons, warble.

Oh, fly, make haste ! see, see, she falls  
    Into a pretty slumber.  
Sing round about her rosy bed,  
    That, waking, she may wonder.  
Say to her, 'tis her lover true  
That sendeth love to you, to you ;  
And when you hear her kind reply,  
    Return with pleasant warblings.

PATRICK CARY

(MIDDLE OF SEVENTEENTH CENTURY)

XXXIII

*HYMN* \*

WHILST I beheld the neck of the dove,  
I spied and read these words,  
    " This pretty dye  
    Which takes your eye  
Is not at all the bird's.  
The dusky raven might  
Have with these colours pleased your sight,  
Had God but chose so to ordain above."  
    This label wore the dove.

Whilst I admired the nightingale,  
These notes she warbled o'er :—  
    " No melody indeed have I,  
    Admire me then no more !  
God has it in his choice  
To give the owl or me this voice ;  
'Tis He, 'tis He, that makes me tell my tale."  
    Thus sang the nightingale.

I met and praised the fragrant rose,  
Blushing, thus answered she :—  
    " The praise you gave,  
    The scent I have,  
Do not belong to me ;  
This harmless odour, none  
But only God indeed does own :  
To be his keepers, my poor leaves He chose."  
    And thus replied the rose.

All creatures, then, confess to God  
That th' owe Him all, but I.  
My senses find  
True, that my mind  
Would still, oft does, deny.  
Hence pride! out of my soul,  
Or it thou shalt no more control.  
I'll learn this lesson, and escape the rod.  
I, too, have all from God.

RICHARD CRASHAW

(1612 ?-1649)

XXXIV

MUSIC'S DUEL \*

Now westward Sol has spent the richest beams  
Of noon's high glory, when hard by the streams  
Of Tiber, on the scene of a green flat,  
Under protection of an oak, there sat  
A sweet lute's-master : in whose gentle airs  
He lost the day's heat and his own hot cares.

Close in the covert of the leaves there stood  
A nightingale, come from the neighbouring wood :—  
The sweet inhabitant of each glad tree,  
Their Muse, their Syren, harmless Syren she—  
There stood she list'ning, and did entertain  
The music's soft report, and mould the same  
In her own murmurs, that, whatever mood  
His curious fingers lent, her voice made good.  
The man perceived his rival, and her art ;  
Disposed to give the light-foot lady sport,  
Awakes his lute, and 'gainst the fight to come  
Informs it, in a sweet *præludium*  
Of closer strains ; and ere the war begin,  
He light skirmishes on every string,  
Charged with a flying touch : and straightway she  
Carves out her dainty voice as readily  
Into a thousand, sweet, distinguished tones ;  
And reckons up in soft divisions  
Quick volumes of wild notes, to let him know  
By that shrill taste she could do something too.

His nimble hand's instinct then taught each string  
A cap'ring cheerfulness ; and made them sing

To their own dance ; now negligently rash  
He throws his arm and with a long-drawn dash  
Blends all together, then distinctly trips  
From this to that, then, quick returning, skips  
And snatches this again, and pauses there.  
She measures every measure, everywhere  
Meets art with art ; sometimes as if in doubt—  
Not perfect yet, and fearing to be out—  
Trails her plain ditty in one long-spun note  
Through the sleek passage of her open throat.  
O clear unwrinkled song ; then doth she point it  
With tender accents, and severely joint it  
By short diminutives, that, being reared  
In contraverting warbles evenly shared  
With her sweet self she wrangles ; he, amazed  
That from so small a channel should be raised  
The torrent of a voice, whose melody  
Could melt into such sweet variety,  
Strains higher yet, that, tickled with rare art,  
The tattling strings—each breathing in his part—  
Most kindly do fall out ; the grumbling bass  
In surly groans disdains the treble's grace ;  
The high-perched treble chirps at this and chides  
Until his finger—moderator—hides  
And closes the sweet quarrel, rousing all,  
Hoarse, shrill, at once : as when the trumpets call  
Hot Mars to th' harvest of Death's field, and woo  
Men's hearts into their hands ; this lesson, too,  
She gives him back, her supple breast thrills out  
Sharp airs, and staggers in a warbling doubt  
Of dallying sweetness, hovers o'er her skill  
And folds in waved notes, with a trembling bill,  
The pliant series of her slippery song ;

Then starts she suddenly into a throng  
Of short, thick sobs, whose thund'ring volleys float  
And roll themselves over her lubric throat  
In panting murmurs, 'stilled out of her breast  
That ever bubbling spring, the sugared nest  
Of her delicious soul, that there does lie  
Bathing in streams of liquid melody—  
Music's best seed-plot ; where in ripened ears  
A golden-headed harvest fairly rears  
His honey-dropping tops, ploughed by her breath,  
Which there reciprocally laboureth.  
In that sweet soil it seems a holy Quire  
Founded to th' name of great Apollo's lyre ;  
Whose silver roof rings to the sprightly notes  
Of sweet-lipped Angel-imps, that swill their throats  
In cream of morning Helicon ; and then  
Prefers soft anthems to the ears of men,  
To woo them from their beds, still murmuring  
That men can sleep while they their matins sing.  
Most divine service ! whose so early lay,  
Prevents the eyelids of the blushing day.  
There might you hear her kindle her soft voice  
In the close murmur of a sparkling noise  
And lay the ground-work of her hopeful song ;  
Still keeping in the forward stream, so long,  
Till a sweet whirlwind striving to get out,  
Heaves her soft bosom, wanders round about,  
And makes a pretty earthquake in her breast ;  
Till the fledged notes at length forsake their nest,  
Fluttering in wanton shoals, and to the sky,  
Winged with their own wild echoes, prattling fly.  
She opes the flood-gate and lets loose a tide  
Of streaming sweetness, which in state doth lie

On the waved back of every swelling strain  
Rising and falling in a pompous train ;  
And while she thus discharges a shrill peal  
Of flashing airs, she qualifies their zeal  
With the cool epode of a graver note,  
Thus high, thus low, as if her silver throat  
Would reach the brazen voice of war's hoarse bird ;  
Her little soul is ravished, and so poured  
Into loose ecstasies that she is placed  
Above herself—music's enthusiast !

Shame now and anger mixed a double stain  
In the musician's face : yet once again,  
Mistress, I come ! Now reach a strain, my lute,  
Above her mock, or be for ever mute ;  
Or tune a song of victory to me,  
Or to thyself sing thine own obsequy !  
So said, his hand sprightly as fire he flings,  
And with a quivering coyness tastes the strings :  
The sweet lipped sisters musically frightened  
Singing their fears, are fearfully delighted :  
Trembling as when Apollo's golden hairs  
Are fanned and frizzled in the wanton airs  
Of his own breath, which, married to his lyre,  
Doth tune the spheres and make Heaven's self look higher :  
From this to that, from that to this, he flies,  
Feels music's pulse in all her arteries  
Caught in a net which there Apollo spreads ;  
His fingers struggle with the vocal threads,  
Following those little rills, he sinks into  
A sea of Helicon ; his hand does go  
Those parts of sweetness which with nectar drop,  
Softer than that which pants in Hebe's cup ;

The humorous strings expound his learned touch  
By various glosses, now they seem to grutch  
And murmur in a buzzing din, then jingle  
In shrill-tongued accents, striving to be single ;  
Every smooth turn, every delicious stroke,  
Gives life to some new grace : thus doth h' invoke  
Sweetness by all her names ; thus bravely thus—  
Fraught with a fury so harmonious—  
The lute's light genius now doth proudly rise,  
Heaved on the surges of swoll'n rhapsodies,  
Whose flourish, meteor-like, doth curl the air  
With flash of high-born fancies, here and there  
Dancing in lofty measures, and anon  
Creeps on the soft touch of a tender tone,  
Whose trembling murmurs, melting in wild airs,  
Runs to and fro, complaining his sweet cares,  
Because those precious mysteries do dwell  
In music's ravished soul he dare not tell,  
But whisper to the world : thus do they vary  
Each string his note, as if they meant to carry  
Their master's blest soul, snatched out at his ears  
By a strong ecstasy, through all the spheres  
Of music's Heaven ; and seat it there on high  
In th' *Empyræum* of pure harmony.  
At length—after so long, so loud a strife,  
Of all the strings, still breathing the best life  
Of blest variety, attending on  
His fingers' fairest revolution,  
In many a sweet rise, many as sweet a fall—  
A full-mouthed diapason swallows all.

This done, he lists what she would say to this ;  
And she, although her breath's late exercise

Had dealt too roughly with her tender throat,  
Yet summons all her sweet powers for a note.  
Alas! in vain! for while, sweet soul, she tries  
To measure all those wild diversities  
Of chatt'ring strings, by the small size of one  
Poor simple voice, raised in a natural tone,  
She fails, and failing, grieves; and grieving, dies;  
She dies, and leaves her life, the victor's prize,  
Falling upon his lute. O, fit to have—  
That lived so sweetly—dead, so sweet a grave.

JOHN HALL OF DURHAM  
(1627-1656)

xxxv

*A PASTORAL HYMN \**

HAPPY choristers of air,  
Who by your nimble flight draw near  
His throne, whose wondrous story,  
And unconfined glory  
Your notes still carol, whom your sound,  
And whom your plummy pipes rebound.

Yet do the lazy snails no less  
The greatness of our Lord confess,  
And those whom weight hath chained,  
And to the earth restrained,  
Their ruder voices do as well,  
Yes, and the speechless fishes tell.

Great Lord, from whom each tree receives,  
Then pays again, as rent, his leaves ;  
Thou dost in purple set  
The rose and violet,  
And giv'st the sickly lily white ;  
Yet in them all Thy name dost write.

ROBERT HERRICK

(1591-1674)

xxxvi

*TO ROBIN REDBREAST \**

LED out for dead, let thy last kindness be  
With leaves and moss-work for to cover me :  
And while the wood-nymphs my cold corse inter,  
Sing thou my dirge, sweet warbling chorister ;  
For epitaph in foliage next write this—  
Here, here the tomb of Robin Herrick is.

## XXXVII

## CHARON AND PHILOMEL \*

## A DIALOGUE SUNG

- Pb.* CHARON ! O gentle Charon ! let me woo thee  
By tears and pity now to come unto me.
- Cb.* What voice so sweet and charming do I hear ?  
Say what thou art.     *Pb.* I prithee first draw near.
- Cb.* A sound I hear, but nothing yet can see ;  
Speak, where thou art.     *Pb.* O Charon, pity me !  
I am a bird, and though no name I tell,  
My warbling note will say I'm Philomel.
- Cb.* What's that to me ? I waft nor fish nor fowls,  
Nor beasts, fond thing, but only human souls.
- Pb.* Alas for me !     *Cb.* Shame on thy witching note  
That made me thus hoist sail and bring my boat :  
But I'll return ; what mischief brought thee hither ?
- Pb.* A deal of love and much, much grief together.
- Cb.* What's thy request ?     *Pb.* That since she's now  
beneath  
Who fed my life, I'll follow her in death.
- Cb.* And is that all ? I'm gone.     *Pb.* By love I pray  
thee.
- Cb.* Talk not of love ; all pray, but few souls pay me.
- Pb.* I'll give thee vows and tears.     *Cb.* Can tears  
pay scores  
For mending sails, for patching boat and oars ?
- Pb.* I'll beg a penny, or I'll sing so long  
Till thou shalt say I've paid thee with a song.
- Cb.* Why then, begin ; and all the while we make  
Our slothful passage o'er the Stygian lake,  
Thou and I'll sing to make these dull shades merry,  
Who else with tears would doubtless drown my ferry.

xxxviii

*TO THE LARK \**

Good speed, for I this day  
Betimes my matins say :  
Because I do  
Begin to woo,  
Sweet-singing lark,  
Be thou the clerk,  
And know thy when  
To say, Amen.  
And if I prove  
Bless'd in my love,  
Then shalt thou be  
High-priest to me,  
At my return,  
To incense burn ;  
And so to solemnise  
Love's and my sacrifice.

JOHN MILTON  
(1608-1674)

XXXIX

*TO THE NIGHTINGALE \**

O NIGHTINGALE, that on yon bloomy spray  
Warblest at eve, when all the woods are still,  
Thou with fresh hope the lover's heart dost fill,  
While the jolly hours lead on propitious May,  
Thy liquid notes that close the eye of day,  
First heard before the shallow cuckoo's bill,  
Portend success in love (<sup>1</sup>) ; O, if Jove's will  
Have linked that amorous power to thy soft lay,  
Now timely sing, ere the rude bird of hate  
Foretell my hopeless doom in some grove nigh ;  
As thou from year to year hast sung too late  
For my relief, yet hadst no reason why :  
Whether the Muse, or Love, call thee his mate,  
Both them I serve, and of their train am I.

## XL

*THE CREATION OF BIRDS \**

THERE the eagle and the stork  
On cliffs and cedar tops their eyries build :  
Part loosely wing the region, part more wise  
In common ranged in figure, wedge their way,  
Intelligent of seasons, and set forth  
Their aery caravan, high over seas  
Flying, and over lands, with mutual wing  
Easing their flight ; so steers the prudent crane  
Her annual voyage, borne on winds ; the air  
Floats, as they pass, fanned with unnumbered plumes.<sup>(1)</sup>  
From branch to branch the smaller birds with song  
Solaced the woods, and spread their painted wings  
Till even ; nor then the solemn nightingale  
Ceased warbling, but all night tuned her soft lays ;  
Others on silver lakes and rivers bathed  
Their downy breast ; the swan with archèd neck  
Between her white wings mantling proudly, rows  
Her state with oary feet ; yet oft they quit  
The dank, and rising on stiff pennons tower  
The mid aerial sky. Others on ground  
Walked firm : the crested cock whose clarion sounds  
The silent hours <sup>(2)</sup> ; and the other, whose gay train  
Adorns him, coloured with the florid hue  
Of rainbows and starry eyes.

ANDREW MARVELL

(1620-1678)

XLI

*THE FOREST-NATURALIST* \*

DARK all without it knits: within  
It opens passable and thin;  
And in as loose an order grows  
As the Corinthian porticoes.  
The arching boughs unite between  
The columns of the temple green;  
And underneath the wingèd Quires  
Echo about their tunèd fires.  
The nightingale does here make choice  
To sing the trials of her voice;  
Low shrubs she sits in, and adorns  
With music high the squatted thorns.  
But highest oaks stoop down to hear  
And listening elders prick the ear.  
The thorn, lest it should hurt her, draws  
Within the skin its shrunken claws.  
But I have for my music found  
A sadder, yet more pleasing sound;  
The stock-doves,<sup>(1)</sup> whose fair necks are graced  
With nuptial rings, their ensigns chaste;  
Yet always, for some cause unknown,  
Sad pair, unto the elms they moan.  
O why should such a couple mourn,  
That in so equal flames do burn!  
Then, as I careless on the bed  
Of gelid strawberries do tread,  
And through the hazels thick espy  
The hatching throstle's shining eye,  
The heron from the ash's top  
The eldest of its young lets drop,

As if it stork-like did pretend  
That tribute to its lord to send.  
But most the hewel's (<sup>2</sup>) wonders are,  
Who here has the holt-felster's (<sup>3</sup>) care.  
He walks still upright from the root,  
Measuring the timber with his foot,  
And all the way, to keep it clean,  
Doth from the bark the wood-moths glean.  
He, with his beak examines well  
Which fit to stand, and which to fell.  
The good he numbers up, and hacks,  
As if he marked them with his axe.  
But where he, tinkling with his beak,  
Does find the hollow oak to speak,  
That for his building he designs,  
And through the tainted side he mines.  
Who could have thought the tallest oak  
Should fall by such a feeble stroke ?  
Nor would it, had the tree not fed  
A traitor-worm within it bred.  
And yet that worm triumphs not long,  
But serves to feed the hewel's young.  
Whiles the oak seems to fall content,  
Viewing the treason's punishment.  
Thus I, easy philosopher,  
Among the birds and trees confer,  
And little now to make me wants  
Or of the fowls, or of the plants.  
Already I begin to call  
In their most learned original ;  
And where I language want, my signs  
The bird upon the bough divines.

HENRY VAUGHAN, SILURIST  
(1621-1695)

XLII

*COCK-CROWING* \*

FATHER of lights ! What sunny seed,  
What glance of day hast thou confined  
Into this bird ? To all the breed  
This busy ray thou hast assigned ;  
    Their magnetism works all night,  
    And dreams of Paradise and light.

Their eyes watch for the morning-hue,  
Their little grain, expelling night,  
So shines and sings, as if it knew  
The path unto the house of light.  
    It seems their candle, howe'er done,  
    Was tined (1) and lighted at the sun.

If joys, and hopes, and earnest throes,  
And hearts, whose pulse beats still for light  
Are given to birds ; who, but thee, knows  
A love-sick soul's exalted flight ?  
    Can souls be tracked by any eye  
    But his, who gave them wings to fly ?

## XLIII

*THE BIRD \**

HITHER thou com'st : the busy wind all night  
 Blew through thy lodging, where thy own warm wing  
 Thy pillow was. Many a sullen storm  
 (For which course man seems much the fitter born,)  
     Rain'd on thy bed  
     And harmless head.

And now as fresh and cheerful as the light  
 Thy little heart in early hymns doth sing  
 Unto that Providence, whose unseen arm  
 Curb'd them, and clothed thee well and warm.  
     All things that be praise him ; and had  
     Their lesson taught them, when first made.

So hills and valleys into singing break,  
 And though poor stones have neither speech nor tongue,  
 While active winds and streams both run and speak,  
 Yet stones are deep in admiratiòn.  
     Thus Praise and Prayer here beneath the Sun  
     Make lesser mornings, when the great are done.

For each inclosèd Spirit is a star  
 Inlightning his own little sphere,  
 Whose light, though fetcht and borrowed from afar,  
     Both mornings makes, and evenings there.

ABRAHAM COWLEY

(1618-1677)

XLIV

THE SWALLOW \*

Foolish prater, what dost thou  
So early at my window do  
With thy tuneless serenade ?  
Well 't had been had Tereus made  
Thee as dumb as Philomel ;  
There his knife had done but well.  
In thy undiscover'd nest  
Thou dost all the winter rest,  
And dreamest o'er thy summer joys  
Free from the stormy season's noise :  
Free from th' ill thou'st done to me ;  
Who disturbs or seeks out thee ?  
Had'st thou all the charming notes  
Of the wood's poetic throats,  
All thy arts could never pay  
What thou'st ta'en from me away.  
Cruel bird, thou'st ta'en away  
A dream out of my arms to-day ;  
A dream that ne'er must equall'd be  
By all that waking eyes may see.  
Thou this damage to repair  
Nothing half so sweet or fair,  
Nothing half so good, canst bring,  
Tho' men say, *thou bring'st the Spring.*

ANONYMOUS

(CIRCA 1250)

XLV

*CUCKOO SONG*

SUMER is icumen in,  
Lhude sing cuccu !  
Groweth sed, and bloweth med,  
And springth the wude nu——  
Sing cuccu !

Awe bleteth after lomb,  
Lhouth after calve cu ;  
Bulluc sterteth, bucke verteth,  
Murie sing cuccu !

Cuccu, cuccu, well singes thu, cuccu !  
Ne swike thu naver nu ;  
Sing cuccu, nu, sing cuccu,  
Sing cuccu, sing cuccu, nu !

*THE ARMONY OF BYRDES \**

## I

WHEN Dame Flora  
    In die aurora  
Had covered the meadows with flowers,  
And all the field  
Was over distilled  
    With lusty Aprell showers ;

## 2

For my disport,  
    Me to comfort,  
When the day began to spring,  
Forth I went  
With a good intent,  
    To hear the Byrdes sing.

## 3

I was not past  
    Not a stone's cast  
So nigh as I could deem ;  
But I did see  
A goodly tree  
    Within an arbour green.

## 4

Whereon did light  
    Byrdes as thick  
As stars in the sky ;  
Praising our Lord,  
Without discord,  
    With goodly armony.

## 5

Then sang the avis  
    Called the mavis  
The treble in ellamy,  
That from the ground  
Her notes around  
    Were heard into the sky.

## 6

Then all the rest  
    At her request,  
Both mean, bass, and tenor,  
With her did respond  
This glorious sound :  
    Te dominum confitemur.

## 7

Then said the nightingale,  
    To make short tale,  
For words I do refuse,  
Because my delight  
Both day and night  
    Is singing for to use.

## 8

Then the Byrdes all  
    Domesticall,  
All at once did cry.  
For mankind's sake,  
Both early and late  
    We be all ready to die.

## 9

Then the red brest  
    His tunes redrest,  
And said now will I hold  
With the church, for there  
Out of the air  
    I keep me from the cold.

## 10

Then the eagle spake,  
    Ye know my estate,  
That I am lord and king ;  
Therefore will I  
To the Father only  
    Give laud and praising.

## 11

Then said the dove,  
    Scripture doth prove  
That from the deity  
The holy spirit  
In Christ did light  
    In likeness of me.

## 12

Then said the wren,  
    I am called the hen  
Of our Lady most comely ;  
Then of her sun  
My notes shall run  
    For the love of that Lady.

## 13

The swallows sang sweet,  
    To man we be meet ;  
For with him we do build,  
Like as from above  
God for mannes love  
    Was born of a maiden mild.

## 14

Then in prostration  
    They made oration  
To Christ that died upon the rood ;  
To have mercy from those  
For whom he chose  
    To shed his precious blood.

## 15

With supplication  
    They made intercession,  
And sang Miserere nostri ;  
Rehearsing this text  
In English next :  
    Lord on us have mercy !

## XLVII

*THE TWA CORBIES (Scottish Version)*

As I was walking all alane  
I heard twa corbies making a mane :  
The tane unto the tither did say,  
“ Whar sall we gang and dine the day ? ”

“ ———In behint yon auld fail <sup>(1)</sup> dyke  
I wot there lies a new-slain knight ;  
And naebody kens that he lies there  
But his hawk, his hound, and his lady fair.

“ His hound is to the hunting gane,  
His hawk to fetch the wild-fowl hame,  
His lady's ta'en anither mate,  
So we may mak our dinner sweet.

“ Ye'll sit on his white hause <sup>(2)</sup> bane,  
And I'll pike out his bonny blue e'en :  
Wi' ae lock o' his gowden hair  
We'll theek <sup>(3)</sup> our nest when it grows bare.

“ Mony a one for him maks mane,  
But nane sall ken whar he is gane :  
O'er his white banes, when they are bare,  
The wind sall blaw for evermair.”

## XLVIII

*THE LOVER TO HIS LOVE HAVING FORSAKEN  
HIM AND BETAKEN HERSELF TO  
ANOTHER \**

THE bird that sometime built within my breast,  
And there as then chief succour did receive,  
Hath now elsewhere built her another nest,  
And of the old hath taken quite her leave.  
To you mine oste that harbour mine old guest,  
Of such a one, as I can now conceive,  
Sith that in change her choice doth chief consist,  
The hawke may check, that now comes fair to fist.

## XLIX

*PIPINGS* \*

SURCHARGED with discontent,  
 To Sylvane's bower I went  
 To ease my heavy grief-oppressèd heart,  
 And try what comfort wingèd creatures  
 Could yield unto my inward troubled smart,  
 By modulating their delightful measures  
 To my ears pleasing ever.  
 Of strains so sweet, sweet birds deprive us never !

The thrush did pipe full clear,  
 And eke with merry cheer  
 The linnet lifted up his pleasant voice.  
 The goldfinch chirped and the pie did chatter,  
 The blackbird whistled and bade me rejoice,  
 The stockdove murmured with a solemn flatter.  
 The little daw, ka-ka, he cried ;  
 The hic-quail <sup>(1)</sup> he beside  
 Tickled his part in parti-coloured coat.  
 The jay did blow his hautboy gallantly.

The wren did treble many a pretty note ;  
 The woodpecker did hammer melody ;  
 The kite,<sup>(2)</sup> tiw-whiw, full oft  
 Cried, soaring up aloft.  
 And down again returnèd presently.  
 To whom the herald of cornutos sang cuckoo  
 Ever, whilst poor Margery cried : Who  
 Did ring night's 'larum bell ?  
 Withal all did do well.  
 O might I hear them ever !  
 Of strains so sweet, sweet birds deprive us never !

Then Hesperus on high  
Brought cloudy night in sky,  
When lo, the thicket-keeping company  
Of feathered singers left their madrigals,  
Sonnets and elegies, and presently  
Shut them within their mossy severals. <sup>(3)</sup>  
And I came home and vowed to love them ever.  
Of strains so sweet, sweet birds deprive us never !

## L

*SWEET SUFFOLK OWL \**

SWEET Suffolk owl, so trimly dight,  
With feathers like a lady bright,  
Thou singest alone, sitting by night,  
    Te whit, te whoo, te whit, to whit.  
Thy note, that forth so freely rolls,  
With shrill command the mouse controls,  
And sings a dirge for dying souls,  
    Te whit, te whoo, te whit, to whit.

## LI

*THE BIRD THAT BEARS THE BELL \**

THE nightingale, the organ of delight,  
The nimble lark, the blackbird, and the thrush,  
And all the pretty quiristers of flight,  
That chant their music notes on every bush,  
Let them no more contend who shall excel ;  
The cuckoo is the bird that bears the bell.

## LII

*COME, BLESSED BIRD . . . \**

COME, blessed bird, and with thy sugared relish  
Help our declining choir now to embellish,  
For Bonny-boots <sup>(1)</sup> that so aloft could fetch it,  
O he is dead, and none of us can reach it.  
Then tune to us, sweet bird, thy shrill recorder,<sup>(2)</sup>  
Begin, and we will follow thee in order.

Elpin and I and Dorus

Will serve for fault of better in the chorus.

Then sang the wood-born minstrel of Diana :

Long live fair Oriana !

## LIII

*SING, MERRY BIRDS . . . \**

SING, merry birds, your cheerful notes,  
For Procne you have seen  
Is come from Summer's queen,  
O tune your throats.

When Procne comes we then are warm,  
Forgetting all cold Winter's harm.  
Now may we perch on branches green,  
And singing sit and not be seen.

## LIV

*PHILIP MY SPARROW* \*

OF all the birds that I do know,  
Philip my sparrow hath no peer ;  
For sit she high, or sit she low,  
Be she far off, or be she near,  
There is no bird so fair, so fine,  
Nor yet so fresh as this of mine ;  
For when she once hath felt a fit,  
Philip will cry still : yet, yet, yet.

Come in a morning merrily  
When Philip hath been lately fed ;  
Or on an evening soberly  
When Philip list to go to bed ;  
It is a heaven to hear my Phipp,  
How she can chirp with merry lip,  
For when she once hath felt a fit,  
Philip will cry still : yet, yet, yet.

She never wanders far abroad,  
But is at home when I do call.  
If I command she lays on load  
With lips, with teeth, with tongue and all.  
She chants, she chirps, she makes such cheer,  
That I believe she hath no peer.  
For when she once hath felt the fit,  
Philip will cry still : yet, yet, yet.

And yet besides all this good sport  
My Philip can both sing and dance,

With new found toys of sundry sort  
    My Philip can both prick and prance.  
And if you say but : fend cut, Phipp !  
    Lord, how the peat <sup>(1)</sup> will turn and skip !  
For when she once hath felt the fit,  
    Philip will cry still : yet, yet, yet.

And to tell truth he were to blame,  
    Having so fine a bird as she,  
To make him all this goodly game  
    Without suspect or jealousy ;  
He were a churl and knew no good,  
    Would see her faint for lack of food,  
For when she once hath felt the fit,  
    Philip will cry still : yet, yet, yet.

LV

*NURSERY RHYME*

JENNY WREN fell sick ;  
    Upon a merry time,  
In came Robin Redbreast,  
    And brought her sops and wine.

Eat well of the sop, Jenny,  
    Drink well of the wine ;  
Thank you, Robin, kindly,  
    You shall be mine.

Jenny she got well,  
    And stood upon her feet,  
And told Robin plainly  
    She loved him not a bit.

Robin, being angry,  
    Hopp'd on a twig,  
Saying, Out upon you,  
    Fye upon you, bold-faced jig !

*THE SKYLARK* \*

THE pretty lark, climbing the welkin clear,  
Cheers with a peer, "Come here, come near, my dear,"  
Then, flitting thence, seeming his fall to rue,  
"Adieu," he saith, "adieu, dear, dear, adieu."

## LVII

*THE LARK* \*

SWIFT through the yielding air I glide,  
While nights shall be shades, I abide,  
Yet in my flight (though ne'er so fast)  
I tune and time the wild wind's blast ;  
And e'er the sun be come about,  
Teach the young lark his lesson out ;  
Who, early as the day is born,  
Sings his shrill anthem to the rising morn.

Let never mortal lose the pains  
To imitate my airy strains,  
Whose pitch, too high for human ears,  
Was set me by the tuneful spheres.  
I carol to the Fairies' King,  
Wake him a-mornings when I sing,  
And when the sun stoops to the deep,  
Rock him again, and his fair Queen to sleep.

*CUCKOO LORE \**

- In April  
    He shows his bill.
- In May  
    He sings all day.
- In June  
    He changes his tune.
- In July  
    He says good-bye.
- In August  
    Go he must.

FROM  
THE RESTORATION  
TO  
THE NINETEENTH CENTURY



SAMUEL BUTLER

(1612-1680)

LIX

*THE BARN OWL* \*

WHILE moonlight, silvering all the walls,  
Through every mouldering crevice falls,  
Tipping with white his powdery plume,  
As shades or shifts the changing gloom ;  
The Owl that, watching in the barn,  
Sees the mouse creeping in the corn,  
Sits still and shuts his round blue eyes  
As if he slept,—until he spies  
The little beast within his stretch—  
Then starts,—and seizes on the wretch !

JOHN DRYDEN  
(1631-1700)

LX

*THE SWALLOW \**

*Departure*

THE swallow, privileged above the rest  
Of all the birds as man's familiar guest,  
Pursues the sun in summer, brisk and bold,  
But wisely shuns the persecuting cold ;  
Is well to chancels and to chimneys known,  
Though 'tis not thought she feeds on smoke alone.  
From hence she has been held of heavenly line,  
Endued with particles of soul divine :  
This merry chorister had long possessed  
Her summer seat, and feathered well her nest,  
Till frowning skies began to change their cheer,  
And time turned up the wrong side of the year ;  
The shedding trees began the ground to strow  
With yellow leaves, and bitter blast to blow ;  
Sad auguries of winter thence she drew,  
Which by instinct or prophecy she knew ;  
When prudence warned her to remove betimes,  
And seek a better heaven and warmer climes.  
Her sons were summoned on a steeple's height,  
And, called in common council, vote a flight.  
The day was named, the next that should be fair ;  
All to the general rendezvous repair ;  
They try their fluttering wings, and trust themselves in air.

. . . . .

*Return*

Who but the swallow now triumphs alone ?  
The canopy of heaven is all her own :

Her youthful offspring to their haunts repair,  
And glide along in glades, and skim in air,  
And dip for insects in the purling springs,  
And stoop on rivers, to refresh their wings.  
Their mothers think a fair provision made,  
That every son can live upon his trade :  
And, now the careful charge is off their hands,  
Look out for husbands, and new nuptial bands :  
The youthful widow longs to be supplied ;  
But first the lover is by lawyers tied  
To settle jointure-chimneys on the bride.  
So thick they couple, in so short a space,  
That Martin's marriage-offerings rise apace.  
Their ancient houses, running to decay,  
Are furbished up, and cèmented with clay ;  
They teem already ; stores of eggs are laid,  
And brooding mothers call Lucina's aid.

SIR JOHN VANBRUGH  
(1666 ?-1726)

LXI

*LEARNED WOMEN* \*

ONCE on a time, a nightingale  
    To changes prone ;  
Unconstant, fickle, whimsical,  
    (A female one),  
Who sung like others of her kind,  
Hearing a well-taught linnet's airs,  
Had other matters in her mind,  
To imitate him she prepares.

Her fancy straight was on the wing :  
    " I fly," quoth she,  
    " As well as he ;  
    I don't know why  
    I should not try  
As well as he to sing."

From that day forth she changed her note,  
She spoiled her voice, she strained her throat :  
She did, as learnèd women do,  
    Till everything  
    That heard her sing,  
Would run away from her—as I from you.

MATTHEW GREEN

(1696-1737)

LXII

*THE SPARROW AND DIAMOND \**

I LATELY saw, what now I sing,  
Fair Lucia's hand display'd ;  
The finger grac'd a diamond ring,  
On that a sparrow play'd.

The feather'd play-thing she caressed,  
She stroked its head and wings ;  
And while it nestled on her breast,  
She lisped the dearest things.

With chisell'd bill a spark ill-set  
He loosened from the rest,  
And swallowed down to grind his meat,  
The easier to digest.

She seized his bill with wild affright,  
Her diamond to descry :  
'Twas gone ! she sickened at the sight,  
Moaning her bird would die.

The tongue-tied knocker none might use,  
The curtains none undraw,  
The footmen went without their shoes,  
The street was laid with straw.

The doctor used his oily art  
Of strong emetic kind,  
Th' apothecary played his part,  
And engineered behind.

When physic ceased to spend its store,  
To bring away the stone,  
Dicky, like people given o'er,  
Picks up when let alone.

His eyes dispelled their sickly dews,  
He pecked behind his wing,  
Lucia, recovering at the news,  
Relapses for the ring.

Meanwhile within her beauteous breast  
Two different passions strove ;  
When av'rice ended the contest,  
And triumphed over love.

Poor, little, pretty, fluttering thing,  
Thy pains the sex display,  
Who, only to repair a ring,  
Could take thy life away.

Drive av'rice from your hearts, ye fair,  
Monster of foulest mien :  
Ye would not let it harbour there,  
Could but its form be seen.

It made a virgin put on guile,  
Truth's image break her word,  
A Lucia's face forbear to smile,  
A Venus kill her bird.

ALEXANDER POPE

(1688-1744)

LXIII

FROM "WINDSOR FOREST"

SEE! from the brake the whirring pheasant springs,  
And mounts exulting on triumphant wings;  
Short in his joy, he feels the fiery wound,  
Flutters in blood, and panting beats the ground.  
Ah! what avail his glossy, varying dyes,  
His purple crest, and scarlet-circled eyes,  
The vivid green his shining plumes unfold,  
His painted wings, and breast that flames with gold?

With slaughtering guns the unwearied fowler roves,  
When frosts have whitened all the naked groves;  
Where doves in flocks the leafless trees o'ershade,  
And lonely woodcocks haunt the watery glade.  
He lifts the tube, and levels with his eye:  
Straight a short thunder breaks the frozen sky.  
Oft, as in airy rings they skim the heath,  
The clamorous lapwings feel the leaden death:  
Oft, as the mounting larks their notes prepare,  
They fall, and leave their little lives in air.

## LXIV

*FROM "ESSAY ON MAN" \**

HAs God, thou fool! work'd solely for thy good,  
Thy joy, thy pastime, thy attire, thy food?

Is it for thee the lark ascends and sings?  
Joy tunes his voice, joy elevates his wings.

Is it for thee the linnnet pours his throat?  
Loves of his own and raptures swell the note.

Is thine alone the seed that strews the plain?  
The birds of heaven shall vindicate their grain.

JAMES THOMSON  
(1700-1748)

LXV

*THE BIRD NATION* \*

As rising from the vegetable world  
My theme ascends, with equal wing ascend,  
My panting Muse ; and hark, how loud the woods  
Invite you forth in all your gayest trim.  
Lend me your song, ye nightingales ! oh, pour  
The mazy-running soul of melody  
Into my varied verse ! while I deduce,  
From the first note the hollow cuckoo sings,  
The symphony of Spring, and touch a theme  
Unknown to fame, the Passion of the groves.

When first the soul of love is sent abroad,  
Warm through the vital air, and on the heart  
Harmonious seizes, the gay troops begin  
In gallant thought to plume the painted wing ;  
And try again the long-forgotten strain,  
At first faint-warbled. Up-springs the lark,  
Shrill-voic'd and loud, the messenger of morn ;  
Ere yet the shadows fly, he mounted sings  
Amid the dawning clouds, and from their haunts  
Calls up the tuneful nations. Every copse  
Deep-tangled, tree irregular, and bush  
Bending with dewy moisture, o'er the heads  
Of the coy quiristers that lodge within,  
Are prodigal of harmony. The thrush  
And wood-lark, o'er the kind contending throng  
Superior heard, run through the sweetest length  
Of notes ; when listening Philomela deigns  
To let them joy, and purposes, in thought  
Elate, to make her night excel their day.

The blackbird whistles from the thorny brake ;  
 The mellow bullfinch answers from the grove :  
 Nor are the linnets o'er the flowering furze  
 Pour'd out profusely, silent. Join'd to these,  
 Innumerable songsters, in the freshening shade  
 Of new-sprung leaves, their modulations mix  
 Mellifluous. The jay, the rook, the daw,  
 And each harsh pipe, discordant heard alone,  
 Aid the full concert : while the stock-dove breathes  
 A melancholy murmur through the whole.

'Tis love creates their melody, and all  
 This waste of music is the voice of love ;  
 That ev'n to birds and beasts, the tender arts  
 Of pleasing teaches. Hence the glossy kind  
 Try every winning way inventive love  
 Can dictate, and in courtship to their mates  
 Pour forth their little souls. First, wide around,  
 With distant awe, in airy rings they rove,  
 Endeavouring by a thousand tricks to catch  
 The cunning, conscious, half-averted glance  
 Of their regardless charmer. Should she seem  
 Softening the least approbance to bestow,  
 Their colours burnish, and, by hope inspir'd,  
 They brisk advance ; then, on a sudden struck,  
 Retire disorder'd ; then again approach ;  
 In fond rotation spread the spotted wing,  
 And shiver every feather with desire.

Connubial leagues agreed, to the deep woods  
 They haste away, all as their fancy leads,  
 Pleasure, or food, or secret safety prompts ;  
 That Nature's great command may be obey'd :  
 Nor all the sweet sensations they perceive  
 Indulg'd in vain. Some to the holly-hedge

Nesting repair, and to the thicket some ;  
Some to the rude protection of the thorn  
Commit their feeble offspring : the cleft tree  
Offers its kind concealment to a few,  
Their food its insects, and its moss their nests.  
Others apart far in the grassy dale,  
Or roughening waste, their humble texture weave.  
But most in woodland solitudes delight,  
In unfrequented glooms, or shaggy banks,  
Steep, and divided by a babbling brook,  
Whose murmurs soothe them all the live-long day,  
When by kind duty fix'd. Among the roots  
Of hazel, pendant o'er the plaintive stream,  
They frame the first foundation of their domes ;  
Dry sprigs of trees, in artful fabric laid,  
And bound with clay together. Now 'tis nought  
But restless hurry through the busy air,  
Beat by unnumber'd wings. The swallow sweeps  
The slimy pool, to build his hanging house  
Intent. And often, from the careless back  
Of herds and flocks a thousand tugging bills  
Pluck hair and wool ; and oft, when unobserv'd  
Steal from the barn a straw : till soft and warm,  
Clean, and complete, their habitation grows.

High from the summit of a craggy cliff,  
Hung o'er the deep, such as amazing frowns  
On utmost Kilda's shore, whose lonely race  
Resign the setting sun to Indian worlds,  
The royal eagle draws his vigorous young,  
Strong-pounc'd, and ardent with paternal fire.  
Now fit to raise a kingdom of their own,  
He drives them from his fort, the towering seat  
For ages of his empire ; which in peace,

Unstain'd he holds, while many a league to sea  
He wings his course, and preys in distant isles.

Should I my steps turn to the rural seat,  
Whose lofty elms, and venerable oaks  
Invite the rook, who, high amid the boughs,  
In early Spring his airy city builds,  
And ceaseless caws amusive ; there, well-pleas'd,  
I might the various polity survey  
Of the mixt household kind. The careful hen  
Calls all her chirping family around,  
Fed and defended by the fearless cock ;  
Whose breast with ardour flames, as on he walks,  
Graceful, and crows defiance. In the pond,  
The finely-chequer'd duck, before her train,  
Rows garrulous. The stately-sailing swan  
Gives out his snowy plumage to the gale ;  
And, arching proud his neck, with oary feet  
Bears forward fierce, and guards his osier-isle,  
Protective of his young. The turkey nigh,  
Loud threatening, reddens ; while the peacock spreads  
His every-colour'd glory to the sun,  
And swims in radiant majesty along.

## LXVI

*MIGRATION* \*

WHEN Autumn scatters his departing gleams,  
Warn'd of approaching Winter, gather'd play  
The swallow-people ; and toss'd wide around,  
O'er the calm sky, in convolution swift,  
The feather'd eddy floats : rejoicing once,  
Ere to their wintry slumbers they retire ;  
In clusters clung, beneath the mouldering bank,  
And where, unpierc'd by frost, the cavern sweats,  
Or rather into warmer climes convey'd,  
With other kindred birds of season, there  
They twitter chearful, till the vernal months  
Invite them welcome back : for thronging now  
Innumerable wings are in commotion all.

Where the Rhine loses his majestic force  
In Belgian plains, won from the raging deep,  
By diligence amazing, and the strong  
Unconquerable hand of Liberty,  
The stork-assembly meets ; for many a day  
Consulting deep, and various, ere they take  
Their arduous voyage through the liquid sky.  
And now their rout design'd, their leaders chose,  
Their tribes adjusted, clean'd their vigorous wings ;  
And many a circle, many a short essay,  
Wheel'd round and round, in congregation full  
The figur'd flight ascends ; and, riding high  
Th' aerial billows, mingles with the clouds.

Or where the Northern ocean in vast whirls  
Boils round the naked melancholy isles  
Of farthest Thule, and th' Atlantic surge

Pours in among the stormy Hebrides ;  
Who can recount what transmigrations there  
Are annual made ? what nations come and go ?  
And how the living clouds on clouds arise ?  
Infinite wings ! till all the plume-dark air  
And rude resounding shore are one wild cry.

RICHARD JAGO  
(1715-1781)

LXVII

*THE BLACKBIRDS : AN ELEGY\**

THE sun had chased the mountain snow,  
His beams had pierced the stubborn soil,  
The melting streams began to flow,  
And ploughmen urged their annual toil.

'Twas then, amidst the vocal throng,  
Whom Nature waked to mirth and love,  
A blackbird raised his am'rous song,  
And thus it echoed through the grove.

“ O fairest of the feathered train !  
For whom I sing, for whom I burn,  
Attend with pity to my strain,  
And grant my love a kind return.

“ For see, the wintry storms are flown,  
And zephyrs gently fan the air ;  
Let us the genial influence own,  
Let us the vernal pastime share.

“ The raven plumes his jetty wing,  
To please his croaking paramour,  
The larks responsive carols sing  
And tell their passion as they soar :

“ But does the raven's sable wing  
Excel the glossy jet of mine ?  
Or can the lark more sweetly sing  
Than we, who strength with softness join ?

- “ O let me then thy steps attend !  
I'll point new treasures to thy sight :  
Whether the grove thy wish befriend,  
Or hedgerows green or meadows bright.
- “ I'll guide thee to the clearest rill,  
Whose streams among the pebbles stray ;  
There will we sip, and sip our fill,  
Or on the flow'ry margin play.
- “ I'll lead thee to the thickest brake,  
Impervious to the schoolboy's eye ;  
For thee the plastered nest I'll make,  
And to thy downy bosom fly.
- “ When, prompted by a mother's care,  
Thy warmth shall form th' imprisoned young ;  
The pleasing task I'll gladly share,  
Or cheer thy labours with a song.
- “ To bring thee food I'll range the fields,  
And cull the best of ev'ry kind,  
Whatever Nature's bounty yields,  
And love's assiduous care can find.
- “ And when my lovely mate would stray,  
To taste the summer sweets at large,  
I'll wait at home the live-long day,  
And fondly tend our little charge.
- “ Then prove with me the sweets of love,  
With me divide the cares of life,  
No bush shall boast in all the grove  
A mate so fond, so blest a wife.”

He ceased his song—the plummy dame  
Heard with delight the love-sick strain,  
Nor long concealed the mutual flame,  
Nor long repressed his am'rous pain.

He led her to the nuptial bow'r,  
And perched with triumph by her side ;  
What gilded roof could boast that hour  
A fonder mate or happier bride ?

Next morn he waked her with a song,  
“ Behold,” he said, “ the new-born day,  
The lark his matin-peal has rung,  
Arise, my love, and come away.”

Together through the fields they strayed,  
And to the murm'ring riv'let's side,  
Renewed their vows, and hopped and played,  
With artless joy, and decent pride.

When O, with grief my Muse relates  
What dire misfortune closed the tale,  
Sent by an order from the Fates,  
A gunner met them in the vale.

Alarmed, the lover cried, “ My dear,  
Haste, haste away, from danger fly ;  
Here, gunner, point thy thunder here,  
O spare my love, and let me die.”

At him the gunner took his aim,  
Too sure the volleyed thunder flew !  
O had he chose some other game,  
Or shot—as he was wont to do !

Divided pair ! forgive the wrong,  
While I with tears your fate rehearse,  
I'll join the widow's plaintive song,  
And save the lover in my verse.

## LXVIII

*THE SWALLOWS*

At length the winter's howling blasts are o'er,  
    Arrayed in smiles the lovely spring returns,  
Now fuel'd hearths attractive blaze no more,  
    And ev'ry breast with inward fervour burns.

Again the daisies peep, the violets blow,  
    Again the vocal tenants of the grove  
Forgot the patt'ring hail or driving snow,  
    Renew the lay to melody and love.

“ And see, my Delia, see o'er yonder stream,  
    Where on the bank the lambs in gambols play,  
Alike attracted by the sunny gleam,  
    Again the swallows take their wonted way.

“ Welcome, ye gentle tribe, your sports pursue,  
    Welcome again to Delia and to me,  
Your peaceful councils on my roof renew,  
    And plan new settlements from danger free.

“ Again I'll listen to your grave debates,  
    Again I'll hear your twitt'ring songs unfold,  
What policy directs your wand'ring states,  
    What bounds are settled,<sup>(1)</sup> and what tribes enrolled

“ Again I'll hear you tell of distant lands,  
    What insect nations rise from Egypt's mud,  
What painted swarms subsist on Lybia's sands,  
    What Ganges yields, and what th' Euphratean flood.

“Thrice happy race ! whom Nature’s call invites  
To travel o’er her realms with active wing,  
To taste her various stores, her best delights,  
The summer’s radiance, and the sweets of spring.”

MICHAEL BRUCE

(1746-1767)

LXIX

*ODE TO THE CUCKOO \**

HAIL, beauteous stranger of the grove !  
Thou messenger of Spring !  
Now Heaven repairs thy rural seat,  
And woods thy welcome sing.

What time the daisy decks the green,  
Thy certain voice we hear ;  
Hast thou a star to guide thy path,  
Or mark the rolling year ?

Delightful visitant ! with thee  
I hail the time of flowers,  
And hear the sound of music sweet  
From birds among the bowers.

The schoolboy, wandering through the wood  
To pull the primrose gay,  
Starts, the new voice of spring to hear,  
And imitates thy lay.

What time the pea puts on the bloom,  
Thou fliest thy vocal vale,  
An annual guest in other lands,  
Another spring to hail.

Sweet bird ! thy bower is ever green,  
Thy sky is ever clear ;  
Thou hast no sorrow in thy song,  
No winter in thy year.

Oh, could I fly, I'd fly with thee!  
We'd make, with joyful wing,  
Our annual visit o'er the globe,  
Companions of the spring.

ROBERT FERGUSSON

(1750-1774)

LXX

*ODE TO THE GOWDSPINK*

FRAE fields where Spring her sweets has blawn  
Wi' caller verdure owre the lawn,  
The Gowdspink <sup>(1)</sup> comes in new attire,  
The brawest 'mang the whistling choir,  
That, ere the sun can clear his een,  
Wi' glib notes sane <sup>(2)</sup> the simmer's green.

Sure Nature herried <sup>(3)</sup> mony a tree,  
For sprains <sup>(4)</sup> and bonny spats to thee :  
Nae mair the rainbow can impart  
Sic glowin ferlies <sup>(5)</sup> o' her art,  
Whase pencil wrought its freaks at will  
On thee, the sey-piece <sup>(6)</sup> o' her skill.  
Nae mair thro' straths in simmer dight  
We seek the rose to bless our sight ;  
Or bid the bonny wa'-flowers sprout  
On yonder ruin's lofty snout.  
Thy shining garments far outstrip  
The cherries upo' Hebe's lip,  
And fool the tints that Nature chose  
To busk and paint the crimson rose.

'Mang men, wae's heart ! we often find  
The brawest drest want peace of mind,  
While he that gangs wi' ragged coat  
Is weil contentit wi' his lot.  
Whan wand wi' glewy birdlime's set,  
To steal far-aff your dautit <sup>(7)</sup> mate,  
Blyth wad ye change your cleething gay  
In lieu of lavrock's sober grey.

In vain through woods you sair may ban  
 Th' envious treachery of man,  
 That, wi' your gowden glister ta'en  
 Still haunts you on the simmer's plain  
 And traps you 'mang the sudden fa's (8)  
 O' winter's dreary dreepin' snaws.  
 Now steekit (9) frae the gowany (10) field,  
 Frae ilka fav'rite houff (11) and bield,  
 But mergh, (12) alas! to disengage  
 Your bonny bouck (13) frae fettering cage,  
 Your free-born bosom beats in vain  
 For darling liberty again.  
 In window hung how aft we see  
 Thee keek (14) around at warblers free,  
 That carrol saft, and sweetly sing  
 Wi' a' the blythness of the spring?  
 Like Tantalus they hing you here  
 To spy the glories of the years;  
 And tho' you're at the burnie's brink,  
 They douna suffer you to drink.

Ah, Liberty! thou bonny dame,  
 How wildly wanton is thy stream,  
 Round whilk the birdies a' rejoice,  
 An' hail you wi' a gratefu' voice.  
 The gowdspink chatters joyous here,  
 And courts wi' glesome sangs his peer:  
 The mavis frae the new-bloom'd thorn  
 Begins his lauds at earest morn;  
 And herd lowns (15) loupin' o'er the grass,  
 Need far less fletching (16) till their lass,  
 Than paughty (17) damsels bred at courts,  
 Wha thraw their mou's and take the dorts (18);

But, reft of thee, fient flee <sup>(19)</sup> we care  
For a' that life ahint can spare.  
The Gowdspink, that sae lang has kend  
Thy happy sweets (his wonted friend),  
Her sad confinement ill can brook  
In some dark chamber's dowy <sup>(20)</sup> nook ;  
Tho' Mary's hand his nebb <sup>(21)</sup> supplies,  
Unkend to hunger's painfu' cries,  
Ev'n beauty canna cheer the heart  
Frae life, frae liberty apart ;  
For now we tyne <sup>(22)</sup> its wonted lay,  
Sae lightsome sweet, sae blythely gay.

Thus Fortune aft a curse can gie,  
To wyle us far frae liberty ;  
Then tent <sup>(23)</sup> her syren smiles wha list,  
I'll ne'er envy your giral's <sup>(24)</sup> grist ;  
For whan fair freedom smiles nae mair,  
Care I for life ? Shame fa' the hair <sup>(25)</sup> ;  
A field o'ergrown wi' rankest stubble,  
The essence of a paltry bubble.

ROBERT BURNS

(1759-1796)

LXXI

*ON SCARING SOME WATER-FOWL IN LOCH-  
TURIT, A WILD SCENE AMONG THE  
HILLS OF OCHTERTYRE \**

WHY, ye tenants of the lake,  
For me your wat'ry haunt forsake ?  
Tell me, fellow-creatures, why  
At my presence thus you fly ?  
Why disturb your social joys,  
Parent, filial, kindred ties ?—  
Common friend to you and me,  
Nature's gifts to all are free :  
Peaceful keep your dimpling wave,  
Busy feed, or wanton lave ;  
Or, beneath the sheltering rock,  
Bide the surging billow's shock.

Conscious, blushing for our race,  
Soon, too soon, your fears I trace.  
Man, your proud, usurping foe,  
Would be lord of all below ;  
Plumes himself in Freedom's pride,  
Tyrant stern to all beside.

The eagle, from the clifty brow,  
Marking you his prey below,  
In his breast no pity dwells,  
Strong Necessity compels.  
But Man, to whom alone is giv'n  
A ray direct from pitying Heav'n,  
Glories in his heart humane—  
And creatures for his pleasure slain.

In these savage, liquid plains,  
Only known to wand'ring swains,  
Where the mossy riv'let strays,  
Far from human haunts and ways ;  
All on Nature you depend,  
And life's poor season peaceful spend.

Or, if man's superior might  
Dare invade your native right,  
On the lofty ether borne,  
Man with all his pow'rs you scorn ;  
Swiftly seek, on clanging wings,  
Other lakes, and other springs ;  
And the foe you cannot brave,  
Scorn at least to be his slave.

## LXXII

*TO THE WOODLARK \**

O STAY, sweet warbling woodlark, stay,  
Nor quit for me the trembling spray ;  
A hapless lover courts thy lay,  
    Thy soothing fond complaining.

Again, again that tender part,  
That I may catch thy melting art ;  
For surely that wad touch her heart,  
    Wha kills me wi' disdainin'.

Say, was thy little mate unkind,  
And heard thee as the careless wind ?  
Oh, nocht but love and sorrow join'd  
    Sic notes o' wae could wauken.

Thou tells o' never-ending care,  
O' speechless grief, and dark despair ;  
For pity's sake, sweet bird, nae mair !  
    Or my poor heart is broken !

## LXXIII

*THE LINNET \**

WITHIN the bush, her covert nest  
A little linnet fondly prest ;  
The dew sat chilly on her breast,  
Sae early in the morning.

She soon shall see her tender brood,  
The pride, the pleasure of the wood,  
Amang the fresh green leaves bedew'd  
Awake the early morning.

## LXXIV

## SONNET

*On hearing a thrush sing in a morning walk in January, written January 25, 1793, the birthday of the author.\**

SING on, sweet Thrush, upon the leafless bough ;  
Sing on, sweet bird, I listen to thy strain ;  
See agèd Winter, 'mid his surly reign,  
At thy blythe carol clears his furrow'd brow.

So in lone Poverty's dominion drear  
Sits meek content with light unanxious heart,  
Welcomes the rapid moments, bids them part,  
Nor asks if they bring aught to hope or fear.

I thank thee, Author of this opening day !  
Thou whose bright sun now gilds the orient skies !  
Riches denied, thy boon was purer joys,  
What wealth could never give nor take away !

Yet come, thou child of poverty and care ;  
The mite high Heaven bestowed, that mite with thee I'll  
share.

## LXXXV

*ELEGY ON CAPTAIN MATTHEW HENDERSON\**

*A gentleman who held the patent for his honours immediately from Almighty God*

MOURN, ye wee songsters o' the wood ;  
 Ye grouse that crap the heather bud ;  
 Ye curlews calling through a clud ;  
     Ye whistling plover ;  
 And mourn, ye whirring pairrick brood  
     He's gane for ever !

Mourn, sooty coots, and speckled teals ;  
 Ye fisher herons, watching eels ;  
 Ye duck and drake, wi' airy wheels  
     Circling the lake ;  
 Ye bitterns, till the quagmire reels,  
     Rair <sup>(1)</sup> for his sake.

Mourn, clamouring craiks at close of day,  
 'Mang fields o' flowering clover gay ;  
 And, when ye wing your annual way  
     Frae our cauld shore,  
 Tell the far warlds wha lies in clay,  
     Wham we deplore.

Ye houlets, frae your ivy bow'r  
 In some auld tree, or eldrich <sup>(2)</sup> tow'r,  
 What time the moon wi' silent glow'r  
     Sets up her horn,  
 Wail thro' the dreary midnight hour  
     Till waukrife <sup>(3)</sup> morn !

## LXXVI

*THE HEATHER WAS BLOOMING \**

THE heather was blooming, the meadows were mawn,  
Our lads gaed a-hunting, ae day at the dawn,  
O'er moors and o'er mosses and mony a glen ;  
At length they discover'd a bonnie moor-hen.<sup>(1)</sup>

I red you beware at the hunting, young men ;  
I red you beware at the hunting, young men ;  
Tak some on the wing, and some as they spring,  
But cannily steal on a bonnie moor-hen.

Sweet brushing the dew from the brown heather-bells,  
Her colours betrayed her on yon mossy fells ;  
Her plumage outlustred the pride o' the spring,  
And O ! as she wanton'd gay on the wing.

Auld Phœbus himsel, as he peep'd o'er the hill,  
In spite of her plumage he tried his skill :  
He levell'd his rays where she bask'd on the brae—  
His rays were outshone, and but mark'd where she lay.

They hunted the valley, they hunted the hill,  
The best of our lads wi' the best of their skill ;  
But still as the fairest she sat in their sight,  
Then whirr ! she was over, a mile at a flight.

WILLIAM COWPER \*

(1731-1800)

LXXVII

*THE ROBIN IN WINTER \**

No noise is here, or none that hinders thought.  
The redbreast warbles still, but is content  
With slender notes, and more than half suppressed :  
Pleased with his solitude, and flitting light  
From spray to spray, where'er he rest he shakes  
From many a twig the pendent drops of ice,  
That twinkle in the withered leaves below.  
Stillness, accompanied with sounds so soft,  
Charms more than silence.

## LXXVIII

## ON A GOLDFINCH

*(Starved to Death in his Cage)*

TIME was when I was free as air,  
The thistles downy feed my fare,  
    My drink the morning dew ;  
I perched at will on ev'ry spray,  
My form genteel, my plumage gay,  
    My strain for ever new.

But gaudy plumage, sprightly strain,  
And form genteel were all in vain,  
    And of a transient date ;  
For, caught and caged, and starved to death,  
In dying sighs my little breath  
    Soon passed the wiry grate.

Thanks, gentle swain, for all my woes,  
And thanks for this effectual close  
    And cure of ev'ry ill !  
More cruelty could none express ;  
And I, if you had shewn me less,  
    Had been your pris'ner still.

## LXXIX

*THE JACKDAW \**

THERE is a bird who, by his coat,  
And by the hoarseness of his note,  
    Might be supposed a crow ;  
A great frequenter of the church,  
Where, bishop-like, he finds a perch,  
    And dormitory too.

Above the steeple shines a plate,  
That turns and turns, to indicate  
    From what point blows the weather.  
Look up—your brains begin to swim,  
'Tis in the clouds—that pleases him,  
    He chooses it the rather.

Fond of the speculative height,  
Thither he wings his airy flight,  
    And thence securely sees  
The bustle and the raree-show  
That occupy mankind below,  
    Secure and at his ease.

You think, no doubt, he sits and muses  
On future broken bones and bruises,  
    If he chances to fall.  
No ; not a single thought like that  
Employs his philosophic pate,  
    Or troubles it at all.

He sees, that this 'great roundabout—  
The world, with all its motley rout,  
    Church, army, physic, law,  
Its customs, and its bus'nesses,  
Is no concern at all of his,  
    And says—what says he ?—Caw.

Thrice happy bird ! I too have seen  
Much of the vanities of men ;  
    And sick of having seen 'em,  
Would cheerfully these limbs resign  
For such a pair of wings as thine  
    And such a head between 'em.

## LXXX

*THE NIGHTINGALE AND THE GLOWWORM*

A NIGHTINGALE that all day long  
Had cheered the village with his song,  
Nor yet at eve his note suspended,  
Nor yet when eventide was ended,  
Began to feel, as well he might,  
The keen demands of appetite ;  
When looking eagerly around,  
He spied far off, upon the ground,  
A something shining in the dark,  
And knew the Glowworm by his spark ;  
So, stooping down from hawthorn top,  
He thought to put him in his crop.

The worm, aware of his intent,  
Harangued him thus, right eloquent :  
“ Did you admire my lamp,” quoth he,  
“ As much as I your minstrelsy,  
You would abhor to do me wrong,  
As much as I to spoil your song :  
For 'twas the self-same Power Divine  
Taught you to sing, and me to shine ;  
That you with music, I with light,  
Might beautify and cheer the night.”  
The songster heard this short oration,  
And warbling out his approbation,  
Released him, as my story tells,  
And found a supper somewhere else.

## LXXXI

*PAIRING TIME ANTICIPATED \**

I SHALL not ask Jean Jacques Rousseau (<sup>1</sup>)  
 If birds confabulate or no ;  
 'Tis clear that they were always able  
 To hold discourse, at least, in fable ;  
 And ev'n the child who knows no better  
 Than to interpret by the letter  
 A story of a cock and bull,  
 Must have a most uncommon skull.

It chanced upon a winter's day,  
 But warm, and bright, and calm as May,  
 The birds, conceiving a design  
 To forestall sweet St. Valentine,  
 In many an orchard, copse and grove,  
 Assembled on affairs of love,  
 And with much twitter and much chatter,  
 Began to agitate the matter.  
 At length a Bullfinch, who could boast  
 More years and wisdom than the most,  
 Entreated, opening wide his beak,  
 A moment's liberty to speak ;  
 And, silence publicly enjoin'd,  
 Delivered briefly thus his mind :  
 " My friends ! be cautious how ye treat  
 The subject upon which we meet ;  
 I fear we shall have winter yet."  
 A finch, whose tongue knew no control,  
 With golden wing and satin poll,  
 A last year's bird, who ne'er had tried  
 What pairing means, thus pert replied :

“Methinks the gentleman,” quoth she,  
“Opposite, in the apple-tree,  
By his good will would keep us single  
Till yonder heaven and earth shall mingle,  
Or (which is likelier to befall)  
Till death exterminate us all.  
I couple without more ado ;  
My dear Dick Redcap, what say you ? ”  
Dick heard, and tweedling, ogling, bridling,  
Turning short round, strutting and sidling,  
Attested glad his approbation  
Of an immediate conjugation.  
Their sentiments, so well express’d,  
Influenced mightily the rest ;  
All paired, and each pair built a nest.  
But though the birds were thus in haste,  
The leaves came on not quite so fast,  
And Destiny, that sometimes bears  
An aspect stern on man’s affairs,  
Not altogether smiled on theirs.  
The wind, of late breathed gently forth,  
Now shifted east, and east by north ;  
Bare trees and shrubs but ill, you know,  
Could shelter them from rain and snow ;  
Stepping into their nests, they paddled,  
Themselves were chilled, their eggs were addled.  
Soon every father bird and mother  
Grew quarrelsome, and pecked each other,  
Parted without the least regret,  
Except that they had ever met,  
And learned in future to be wiser  
Than to neglect a good adviser.

JAMES HURDIS  
(1763-1801)

LXXXII

*A BIRD'S NEST \**

✓  
It was my admiration  
To view the structure of that little work,  
A bird's nest—mark it well, within, without :  
No tool had he that wrought, no knife to cut,  
No rail to fix, no bodkin to insert,  
No glue to join ; his little beak was all ;  
And yet how neatly finished ! What nice hand,  
With every implement and means of art,  
And twenty years' apprenticeship to boot,  
Could make me such another ? Fondly then  
We boast of excellence, whose noblest skill  
Instinctive genius foils !

## LXXXIII

*HOME-MAKING \**

Now ev'ry feather'd tenant of the grove  
Labours his sweetest song, studious to cheer  
His busy mate, a pensive architect,  
That builds the woven wonder of the nest,  
Laps in a gentle cradle lin'd with down  
Her future brood, or vigilant expects  
Day after day the pregnant egg to live,  
And supplicate provision not in vain.  
Such care maternal needs the sweet relief  
Of labour'd song, and sometimes, parent Sir,  
The free assistance of a silent beak.  
Enamour'd songsters, grateful is the task,  
While you from ev'ry brake the rising orb  
With sweet hosanna welcome, to admire  
And mark the several energies, that fill  
Your morning anthem of spontaneous praise.  
The sparrow couple with industrious bill  
The scatter'd straw collect, contriving snug  
Under the cottage eave or low-roof'd barn  
Their genial couch. More than mere chirpers now,  
They watch the flouting feather as it flies,  
Eye-serve the goose for his superfluous down,  
Or dressing fowl, or self-adorning drake,  
And bear triumphant the loose spoil away.  
Nor these alone are busy. Feathery pairs,  
Innumerable as the kindling bud,  
Of wedded cares partake, and build the nest,  
And hopes divide, with constancy that shames  
Man's brittle contract and infirm regard.

Lo! to the steeple with alternate wing  
Bears expeditious his long twig the daw,  
Nor seldom struggles with his awkward freight,  
And drops it, startled by the hooting boy  
That shouts beneath. The solitary dove,  
Which loves the still dilapidated tower  
Of desert castle, or the time-cleft arch  
Of ancient chantry, whose unshelter'd shafts  
Ivy in pity clothes, and verdant moss  
Crowns in respect his weather-beaten head,  
With frequent wing alighting in the field  
Bears the loose stubble thence, and builds on high  
Her bed unseen, beyond the pilferer's reach.  
His airy nurs'ry in the neighb'ring elm  
Constructs the social rook, and makes the grove  
That girds the crumbling edifice around,  
And ev'ry angle of its ruin'd pile,  
With the bass note of his harsh love resound.

GEORGE CRABBE

(1754-1832)

LXXXIV

*A STORM ON THE EAST COAST \**

VIEW now the winter storm ! above, one cloud,  
Black and unbroken, all the skies o'ershroud :  
The unwieldy porpoise through the day before  
Had rolled in view of boding men on shore ;  
And sometimes hid and sometimes showed his form,  
Dark as the cloud and furious as the storm.  
All where the eye delights yet dreads to roam,  
The breaking billows cast the flying foam  
Upon the billows rising—all the deep  
Is restless change ; the waves so swelled and steep,  
Breaking and sinking, and the sunken swells,  
Nor one, one moment, in its station dwells :  
But nearer land you may the billows trace,  
As if contending in their watery chase ;  
May watch the mightiest till the shoal they reach,  
Then break and hurry to their utmost stretch ;  
Curled as they come, they strike with furious force,  
And then reflowing, take their grating course,  
Raking the rounded flints, which ages past  
Rolled by their rage, and shall to ages last.  
Far off the petrel in the troubled way  
Swims with her brood, or flutters in the spray ;  
She rises often, often drops again,  
And sports at ease on the tempestuous main.  
High o'er the restless deep, above the reach  
Of gunners' hope, vast flocks of wild-duck stretch ;  
Far as the eye can glance on either side,  
In a broad space and level line they glide ;

All in their wedge-like figures from the north  
Day after day, flight after flight, go forth.  
In-shore their passage tribes of sea-gulls urge,  
And drop for prey within the sweeping surge ;  
Oft in the rough opposing blast they fly  
Far back, then turn and all their force apply,  
While to the storm they give their weak complaining cry ;  
Or clap the sleek white pinion on the breast,  
And in the restless ocean dip for rest.

JAMES GRAHAME

(1765-1811)

LXXXV

*THE REDBREAST'S HAUNT \**

HIGH is his perch, but humble is his home,  
And well concealed. Sometimes within the sound  
Of heartsome mill-clack, where the spacious door,  
White-dusted, tells him plenty reigns around—  
Close at the root of brier-bush, that o'erhangs  
The narrow stream, with shealings bedded white,  
He fixes his abode, and lives at will ;  
Oft near some single cottage he prefers  
To rear his little home ; there, pert and spruce,  
He shares the refuse of the goodwife's churn,  
Which kindly on the wall for him she leaves :  
Below her lintel oft he lights, then in  
He boldly flits, and fluttering loads his bill,  
And to his young the yellow treasure bears.

LXXXVI

*THE GORCOCK \**

WITH earliest spring, while yet in mountain cleughs  
Lingers the frozen wreath, when yeanling lambs  
Upon the little heath-encircled patch  
Of smoothest sward totter,—the Gorcock's <sup>(1)</sup> call  
Is heard from out the mist, high on the hill ;  
But not till when the tiny heather bud  
Appears, are struck the spring-time leagues of love.  
Remote from shepherd's hut, or trampled fold,  
The new joined pair their lowly mansion pitch,  
Perhaps beneath the juniper's rough shoots,  
Or castled on some plat of tufted heath,  
Surrounded by a narrow sable moat  
Of swampy moss. Within the fabric rude,  
Or e'er the new moon waxes to the full,  
The assiduous dam eight spotted spheroids <sup>(2)</sup> sees,  
And feels beneath her heart, fluttering with joy.  
Nor long she sits, till, with redoubled joy,  
Around her she beholds an active brood  
Run to and fro or through her covering wings  
Their downy heads look out ; and much she loves  
To pluck the heather crops, <sup>(3)</sup> not for herself  
But for their little bills. Thus, by degrees,  
She teaches them to find the food, which God  
Has spread for them amid the desert wild,  
And seeming barrenness. Now they essay  
Their full-plumed wings, and whirring, spurn the ground ;  
But soon alight fast by yon moss-grown cairn,  
Round which the berries blae (a beauteous tint  
Of purple, deeper dyed with darkest blue)

Lurk 'mid the small round leaves. Enjoy the hour,  
While yet ye may, ye unoffending flock!  
For not far distant now the bloody morn  
When man's protection, selfishly bestowed,  
Shall be withdrawn, and murder roam at will.

ANONYMOUS

LXXXVII

*PIGEON AND WREN* \*

Coo-oo, coo-oo,  
It's as much as a pigeon can do  
To maintain two ;  
But the little wren can maintain ten,  
And bring them all up like gentlemen.

LXXXVIII

*CROWS \**

ON the first of March,  
The crows begin to search.  
By the first of April,  
They are sitting still.  
By the first o' May  
They're a flown away ;  
Croupin' greedy back again,  
Wi' October's wind and rain.

LXXXIX

*THE ROBIN AND THE WREN* \*

THE robin and the wren,  
Are God Almighty's cock and hen.  
The martin and the swallow,  
Are God Almighty's bow and arrow.

xc

*MAGPIES* \*

ONE, Sorrow,  
Two, Mirth,  
Three, a Wedding,  
Four, a Birth,  
Five, for Silver,  
Six, for Gold,  
Seven, for a secret not to be told,  
Eight, for Heaven,  
Nine, for Hell,  
And Ten, for the devil's ain sel.



FROM  
THE NINETEENTH CENTURY  
TO  
LIVING WRITERS



WILLIAM BLAKE

(1757-1827)

xci

*THE BLOSSOM \**

MERRY, merry sparrow!  
Under leaves so green,  
A happy blossom  
Sees you, swift as arrow,  
Seek your cradle narrow  
Near my bosom.

Pretty, pretty robin!  
Under leaves so green,  
A happy blossom  
Hears you sobbing, sobbing,  
Pretty, pretty robin,  
Near my bosom.

XCII

## THE BIRDS \*

- He.* WHERE thou dwellest, in what grove,  
Tell me, fair one, tell me, love ;  
Where thou thy charming nest dost build,  
O thou pride of every field !
- She.* Yonder stands a lonely tree,  
There I live and mourn for thee ;  
Morning drinks my silent tear,  
And evening winds my sorrow bear.
- He.* O thou summer's harmony,  
I have liv'd and mourn'd for thee ;  
Each day I mourn along the wood,  
And night hath heard my sorrows loud.
- She.* Dost thou truly long for me ?  
And am I thus sweet to thee ?  
Sorrow now is at an end,  
O my lover and my friend !
- He.* Come, on wings of joy we'll fly  
To where my bower hangs on high ;  
Come, and make thy calm retreat  
Among green leaves and blossoms sweet.

XCIII

## SONG \*

Love and harmony combine,  
And around our souls entwine,  
While thy branches mix with mine,  
And our roots together join.

Joys upon our branches sit,  
Chirping loud and singing sweet ;  
Like gentle streams beneath our feet  
Innocence and virtue meet.

Thou the golden fruit dost bear,  
I am clad in flowers fair ;  
Thy sweet boughs perfume the air,  
And the turtle buildeth there.

There she sits and feeds her young,  
Sweet I hear her mournful song ;  
And thy lovely leaves among,  
There is love, I hear her tongue.

There his charming nest doth lay,  
There he sleeps the night away,  
There he sports along the day,  
And doth among our branches play.

xciv

*JUBILANCE* \*

THOU hearest the Nightingale begin the Song of Spring :  
The Lark sitting upon his earthy bed, just as the morn  
Appears, listens silent : then springing from the waving  
Corn-field loud

He leads the Choir of Day ; trill, trill, trill, trill :  
Mounting upon the wings of light into the Great Expanse ;  
Re-echoing against the lovely blue and shining heavenly  
Shell :

His little throat labours with inspiration ; every feather  
On throat and breast and wings vibrates with the effluence  
Divine.

All Nature listens silent to him, and the awful Sun  
Stands still upon the Mountain looking on this little Bird  
With eyes of soft humility, and wonder, love, and awe.  
Then loud from their green covert all the Birds begin their  
Song,  
The Thrush, the Linnet, and the Goldfinch, Robin and the  
Wren

Awake the Sun from his sweet reverie upon the Mountain :  
The Nightingale again assays his song, and through the day  
And through the night warbles luxuriant : every Bird of  
Song  
Attending his loud harmony with admiration and love.

JOHN KEATS  
(1795-1821)

xcv

*ODE TO A NIGHTINGALE*

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains  
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,  
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains  
One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk :  
'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,  
But being too happy in thy happiness,—  
That thou, light-wingèd dryad of the trees,  
In some melodious plot  
Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,  
Singest of summer in full-throated ease.

O for a draught of vintage ! that hath been  
Cool'd a long age in the deep-delvèd earth,  
Tasting of Flora and the country-green,  
Dance, and Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth !  
O for a beaker full of the warm South !  
Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,  
With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,  
And purple-stainèd mouth ;  
That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,  
And with thee fade away into the forest dim :

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget  
What thou among the leaves hast never known,  
The weariness, the fever, and the fret  
Here, where men sit and hear each other groan ;  
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last, grey hairs,  
Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies ;

Where but to think is to be full of sorrow  
 And leaden-eyed despairs ;  
 Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,  
 Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow.

Away ! away ! for I will fly to thee,  
 Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,  
 But on the viewless wings of Poesy,  
 Though the dull brain perplexes and retards :  
 Already with thee ! tender is the night,  
 And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,  
 Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays ;  
 But here there is no light,  
 Save what from Heaven is with the breezes blown  
 Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,  
 Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,  
 But, in embalmèd darkness, guess each sweet  
 Wherewith the seasonable month endows  
 The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild ;  
 White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine ;  
 Fast-fading violets cover'd up in leaves ;  
 And mid-May's eldest child,  
 The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,  
 The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

Darkling I listen ; and for many a time  
 I have been half in love with easeful Death,  
 Call'd him soft names in many a musèd rhyme,  
 To take into the air my quiet breath ;  
 Now more than ever seems it rich to die,  
 To cease upon the midnight with no pain,

While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad  
    In such an ecstasy!  
Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain—  
    To thy high requiem become a sod.

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!  
    No hungry generations tread thee down;  
The voice I hear this passing night was heard  
    In ancient days by emperor and clown:  
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path  
    Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,  
    She stood in tears amid the alien corn;  
    The same that oft-times hath  
Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam  
    Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

Forlorn! the very word is like a bell  
    To toll me back from thee to my sole self!  
Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well  
    As she is famed to do, deceiving elf.  
Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades  
    Past the near meadows, over the still stream,  
    Up the hill-side; and now 'tis buried deep  
    In the next valley-glades:  
Was it a vision, or a waking dream?  
    Fled is that music:—Do I wake or sleep?

## xcvi

*EPISTLE TO CHARLES COWDEN CLARKE \**

OFt have you seen a swan superbly frowning,  
And with proud breast his own white shadow crowning ;  
He slants his neck beneath the waters bright  
So silently, it seems a beam of light  
Come from the galaxy : anon he sports,—  
With outspread wings the Naiad Zephyr courts,  
Or ruffles all the surface of the lake  
In striving from its crystal face to take  
Some diamond water drops, and them to treasure  
In milky nest and sip them off at leisure.  
But not a moment can he there ensure them,  
Nor to such downy rest can he allure them ;  
For down they rush as though they would be free,  
And drop like hours into eternity.

## xcvii

*“SAY, DOTH THE DULL SOIL . . .”* \*

SAY, doth the dull soil  
Quarrel with the proud forests it hath fed,  
And feedeth still, more comely than itself?  
Can it deny the chieftom of green groves?  
Or shall the tree be envious of the dove  
Because it cooeth, and hath snowy wings  
To wander wherewithal and find its joys?  
We are such forest trees, and our fair boughs  
Have bred forth, not pale solitary doves,  
But eagles golden-feathered, who do tower  
Above us in their beauty, and must reign  
In right thereof; for 'tis the eternal law  
That first in beauty should be first in might.

xcviii

*GOLDFINCHES* \*

SOMETIMES goldfinches one by one will drop  
From low-hung branches: little space they stop;  
But sip, and twitter, and their feathers sleek;  
Then off at once, as in a wanton freak:  
Or perhaps, to show their black and golden wings,  
Pausing upon their yellow flutterings.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

(1792-1822)

XCIX

*THE ROOKS* \*

AY, many flowering islands lie  
In the waters of wide Agony :  
To such a one this morn was led  
My bark by soft winds piloted :  
'Mid the mountains Euganean  
I stood listening to the pæan  
With which the legioned rooks did hail  
The sun's uprise majestic ;  
Gathering round with wings all hoar,  
Through the dewy mist they soar  
Like grey shades, till the eastern heaven  
Bursts, and then, as clouds of even,  
Flecked with fire and azure, lie  
In the unfathomable sky.  
So their plumes of purple grain,  
Starred with drops of golden rain,  
Gleam above the sunlight woods,  
As in silent multitudes  
On the morning's fitful gale  
Through the broken mist they sail.  
And the vapours cloven and gleaming  
Follow down the dark steep streaming.  
Till all is bright, and clear, and still.  
Round the solitary hill.

## c

*SEMICHORUS OF SPIRITS FROM "PROMETHEUS UNBOUND" \**

THERE the voluptuous nightingales  
Are awake through all the broad noon-day.  
When one with bliss or sadness fails,  
And through the windless ivy-boughs,  
Sick with sweet love, droops dying away  
On its mate's music-panting bosom ;  
Another from the swinging blossom,  
Watching to catch the languid close  
Of the last strain, then lifts on high  
The wings of the weak melody,  
Till some new strain of feeling bear  
The song, and all the woods are mute ;  
When there is heard through the dim air  
The rush of wings, and rising there  
Like many a lake-surrounded flute,  
Sounds overflow the listener's brain  
So sweet, that joy is almost pain.

## CI

*THE WOODMAN AND THE NIGHTINGALE \**

A WOODMAN whose rough heart was out of tune  
(I think such hearts yet never came to good)  
Hated to hear, under the stars or moon,

One nightingale in an interfluous wood  
Sate the hungry dark with melody <sup>(1)</sup>;—  
And as a vale is watered by a flood,

Or as the moonlight fills the open sky,  
Struggling with darkness,—as a tuberosé  
Peoples some Indian dell with scents which lie

Like clouds above the flower from which they rose,  
The singing of that happy nightingale  
In this sweet forest, from the golden close

Of evening till the star of dawn may fail,  
Was interfused upon the silentness;  
The folded roses and the violets pale

Heard her within her slumbers, the abyss  
Of heaven with all its planets, the dull ear  
Of the night-cradled earth, the loneliness

Of the circumfluous waters,—every sphere  
And every flower and beam and cloud and wave,  
And every wind of the mute atmosphere,

And every beast stretched in its rugged cave,  
 And every bird lulled on its mossy bough,  
 And every silver moth fresh from the grave

Which is its cradle—ever from below  
 Aspiring like one who loves too fair, too far,  
 To be consumed within the purest glow

Of one serene and unapproachèd star,  
 As if it were a lamp of earthly light,  
 Unconscious, as some human lovers are,

Itself how low, how high beyond all height  
 The heaven where it would perish!—and every form  
 That worshipped in the temple of the night

Was awed into delight, and by the charm  
 Girt as with an interminable zone,  
 Whilst that sweet bird, whose music was a storm

Of sound, shook forth the dull oblivion  
 Out of their dreams ; harmony became love  
 In every soul but one.

. . . . .  
 And so this man returned with axe and saw  
 At evening close from killing the tall treen,  
 The soul of whom by Nature's gentle law

Was each a wood-nymph, and kept ever green  
 The pavement and the roof of the wild copse,  
 Chequering the sunlight of the blue serene

With jagged leaves,—and from the forest tops  
Singing the winds to sleep—or weeping oft  
Fast showers of aerial water-drops

Into their mother's bosom, sweet and soft,  
Nature's pure tears which have no bitterness :—  
Around the cradles of the birds aloft

They spread themselves into the loveliness  
Of fan-like leaves, and over pallid flowers  
Hang like moist clouds :—or, where high branches kiss,

Make a green space among the silent bowers,  
Like a vast fane in a metropolis,  
Surrounded by the columns and the towers

All overwrought with branch-like traceries  
In which there is religion—and the mute  
Persuasion of unkindled melodies,

Odours and gleams and murmurs, which the lute  
Of the blind pilot-spirit of the blast  
Stirs as it sails, now grave and now acute,

Wakening the leaves and waves, ere it has passed  
To such brief unison as on the brain  
One tone, which never can recur, has cast,  
One accent never to return again.

. . . . .  
The world is full of Woodmen who expel  
Love's gentle Dryads from the haunts of life,  
And vex the nightingales in every dell.

## CII

*THE CAPTIVE BIRD \**

Poor captive bird ! who, from thy narrow cage,  
Pourest such music, that it might assuage  
The rugged hearts of those who prisoned thee,  
Were they not deaf to all sweet melody ;  
This song shall be thy rose : its petals pale  
Are dead, indeed, my adored nightingale !  
But soft and fragrant is the faded blossom,  
And it has no thorn left to wound thy bosom.

High, spirit-wingèd Heart ! who dost for ever  
Beat thine unfeeling bars with vain endeavour,  
Till those bright plumes of thought, in which arrayed,  
It over-soared this low and worldly shade,  
Lie shattered ; and thy panting, wounded breast  
Stains with dear blood its unmaternal nest !  
I weep vain tears : blood would less bitter be,  
Yet poured forth gladlier, could it profit thee.

## CIII

*THE WIDOW BIRD \**

A widow bird sat mourning for her love  
Upon a wintry bough ;  
The frozen wind crept on above,  
The freezing stream below.

There was no leaf upon the forest bare,  
No flower upon the ground,  
And little motion in the air,  
Except the mill-wheel sound.

## CIV

## TO A SKYLARK \*

HAIL to thee, blithe Spirit !  
Bird thou never wert  
That from Heaven, or near it,  
Pourest thy full heart  
In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.

Higher still and higher  
From the earth thou springest,  
Like a cloud of fire ;  
The blue deep thou wingest,  
And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest.

In the golden lightning  
Of the sunken sun,  
O'er which clouds are bright'ning,  
Thou dost float and run ;  
Like an unbodied joy whose race is just begun.

The pale purple even  
Melts around thy flight ;  
Like a star of heaven,  
In the broad daylight  
Thou art unseen, but yet I hear thy shrill delight—

Keen as are the arrows  
Of that silver sphere,  
Whose intense lamp narrows  
In the white dawn clear,  
Until we hardly see, we feel that it is there.

All the earth and air  
With thy voice is loud,  
As, when night is bare,  
From one lonely cloud  
The moon rains out her beams, and heav'n is overflowed.

What thou art we know not ;  
What is most like thee ?  
From rainbow clouds there flow not  
Drops so bright to see,  
As from thy presence showers a rain of melody.

Like a poet hidden  
In the light of thought,  
Singing hymns unbidden,  
Till the world is wrought  
To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not :

Like a high-born maiden  
In a palace tower,  
Soothing her love-laden  
Soul in secret hour  
With music sweet as love, which overflows her bower ;

Like a glow-worm golden  
In a fall of dew,  
Scattering un beholden  
Its aerial hue  
Among the flowers and grass, which screen it from the view :

Like a rose embowered  
In its own green leaves,  
By warm winds deflowered,  
Till the scent it gives  
Makes faint with too much sweet these heavy-wingèd thieves:

Sound of vernal showers  
On the twinkling grass,  
Rain-awaken'd flowers—  
All that ever was  
Joyous, and clear, and fresh, thy music doth surpass.

Teach us, Sprite or Bird,  
What sweet thoughts are thine :  
I have never heard  
Praise of love or wine  
That panted forth a rapture so divine.

Chorus hymeneal,  
Or triumphal chant,  
Matched with thine would be all  
But an empty vaunt,  
A thing wherein we feel there is some hidden want.

What objects are the fountains  
Of thy happy strain ?  
What fields, or waves, or mountains ?  
What shapes of sky or plain ?  
What love of thine own kind ? what ignorance of pain ? .

With thy clear keen joyance  
Languor cannot be :  
Shadow of annoyance  
Never came near thee :  
Thou lovest—but ne'er knew love's sad satiety.

Waking or asleep,  
Thou of death must deem  
Things more true and deep  
Than we mortals dream,  
Or how could thy notes flow in such a crystal stream ?

We look before and after,  
And pine for what is not :  
Our sincerest laughter  
With some pain is fraught ;  
Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.

Yet, if we could scorn  
Hate, and pride, and fear ;  
If we were things born  
Not to shed a tear,  
I know not how thy joy we ever should come near.

Better than all measures  
Of delightful sound,  
Better than all treasures  
That in books are found,  
Thy skill to poet were, thou scorner of the ground !

Teach me half the gladness  
That thy brain must know,  
Such harmonious madness  
From my lips would flow,  
The world should listen then, as I am listening now.

CV

*KINGFISHERS* \*

I CANNOT tell my joy, when o'er a lake  
Upon a drooping bough with nightshade twined,  
I saw two azure halcyons clinging downward  
And thinning one bright bunch of amber berries,  
With quick long beaks, and in the deep there lay  
Those lovely forms imaged as in a sky.

CVI

*THE AZIOLA \**

“Do you not hear the Aziola cry ?  
Methinks she must be nigh,”  
Said Mary, as we sate  
In dusk, ere stars were lit, or candles brought ;  
And I, who thought  
This Aziola was some tedious woman,  
Asked, “Who is Aziola ?” How elate  
I felt to know that it was nothing human,  
No mockery of myself to fear or hate :  
And Mary saw my soul,  
And laught, and said, “Disquiet yourself not ;  
’Tis nothing but a little downy owl.”

Sad Aziola, many an eventide  
Thy music I had heard  
By wood and stream, meadow and mountain side,  
And fields and marshes wide,  
Such as nor voice, nor wind, nor lute, nor bird,  
The soul ever stirred ;  
Unlike and far sweeter than them all.  
Sad Aziola ! from that moment I  
Loved thee and thy sad cry.

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

(1772-1834)

CVII

*GLYCINE'S SONG* \*

A SUNNY shaft did I behold,  
From sky to earth it slanted :  
And poised therein a bird so bold—  
Sweet bird, thou wert enchanted !  
He sunk, he rose, he twinkled, he trolled  
Within that shaft of sunny mist ;  
His eyes of fire, his beak of gold,  
All else of amethyst !

And thus he sang : “ Adieu ! adieu !  
Love's dreams prove seldom true.  
Sweet month of May,  
We must away :  
Far, far away !  
To-day ! to-day ! ”

## CVIII

*THE NIGHTINGALE* \*

A CONVERSATION POEM. APRIL, 1798

No cloud, no relique of the sunken day  
Distinguishes the West, no long thin slip  
Of sullen light, no obscure trembling hues.  
Come, we will rest on this old mossy bridge !  
You see the glimmer of the stream beneath  
But hear no murmuring : it flows silently,  
O'er its soft bed of verdure. All is still,  
A balmy night ! and though the stars be dim,  
Yet let us think upon the vernal showers  
That gladden the green earth, and we shall find  
A pleasure in the dimness of the stars.  
And hark ! the Nightingale begins its song,  
" Most musical, most melancholy " bird !  
A melancholy bird ! Oh, idle thought !  
In nature there is nothing melancholy.  
But some night-wandering man whose heart was pierced  
With the remembrance of a grievous wrong  
Or slow distemper, or neglected love,  
(And so, poor wretch ! filled all things with himself,  
And made all gentle sounds tell back the tale  
Of his own sorrow) he, and such as he,  
First named these notes a melancholy strain.  
And many a poet echoes the conceit ;  
Poet who hath been building up the rhyme  
When he had better far have stretched his limbs  
Beside a brook in mossy forest-dell  
By sun or moonlight, to the influxes  
Of shapes and sounds and shifting elements  
Surrendering his whole spirit, of his song

And of his fame forgetful ! so his fame  
Should share in Nature's immortality ;  
A venerable thing ! and so his song  
Should make all Nature lovelier, and itself  
Be loved like Nature ! But 'twill not be so ;  
And youths and maidens most poetical,  
Who lose the deepening twilight of the spring  
In ball-rooms and hot theatres, they still  
Full of meek sympathy must heave their sighs  
O'er Philomela's pity-pleading strains.

My Friend, and thou, our Sister ! we have learnt  
A different lore ; we may not thus profane  
Nature's sweet voices, always full of love  
And joyance ! 'Tis the merry Nightingale  
That crowds, and hurries, and precipitates  
With fast thick warble his delicious notes,  
As he were fearful that an April night  
Would be too short for him to utter forth  
His love-chant, and disburthen his full soul  
Of all its music !

And I know a grove  
Of large extent, hard by a castle huge,  
Which the great lord inhabits not ; and so  
This grove is wild with tangling underwood,  
And the trim walks are broken up, and grass,  
Thin grass and king-cups grow within the paths.  
But never elsewhere in one place I knew  
So many nightingales ; and far and near,  
In wood and thicket, over the wide grove,  
They answer and provoke each other's song,  
With skirmish and capricious passagings,

And murmurs musical and swift "jug-jug,"  
And one low piping sound more sweet than all—  
Stirring the air with such a harmony,  
That should you close your eyes, you might almost  
Forget it was not day! On moonlit bushes,  
Whose dewy leaflets are but half disclosed,  
You may perchance behold them on the twigs,  
Their bright, bright eyes, their eyes both bright and full,  
Glistening, while many a glow-worm in the shade  
Lights up her love-torch.

A most gentle Maid,  
Who dwelleth in her hospitable home  
Hard by the castle, and at latest eve  
(Even like a lady vowed and dedicate  
To something more than Nature in the grove)  
Glides through the pathways; she knows all their notes,  
That gentle Maid! and oft a moment's space,  
What time the moon was lost behind a cloud,  
Hath heard a pause of silence; till the moon,  
Emerging, hath awakened earth and sky  
With one sensation, and these wakeful birds  
Have all burst forth in choral minstrelsy,  
As if some sudden gale had swept at once  
A hundred airy harps! And she hath watched  
Many a nightingale perched giddily  
On blossomy twig still swinging from the breeze,  
And to that motion tune his wanton song,  
Like tipsy joy that reels with tossing head.

Farewell, O Warbler! till to-morrow eve,  
And you, my friends, farewell, a short farewell!  
We have been loitering long and pleasantly,

And now for our dear homes.—That strain again !  
Full fain it would delay me ! My dear babe,  
Who, capable of no articulate sound,  
Mars all things with his imitative lisp,  
How he would place his hand beside his ear,  
His little hand, the small forefinger up,  
And bid us listen ! And I deem it wise  
To make him Nature's playmate. He knows well  
The evening-star ; and once, when he awoke  
In most distressful mood (some inward pain  
Had made up that strange thing, an infant's dream)  
I hurried with him to our orchard plot,  
And he beheld the moon, and, hushed at once,  
Suspends his sobs, and laughs most silently,  
While his fair eyes, that swam with undropped tears,  
Did glitter in the yellow moonbeam ! Well !—  
It is a father's tale : But if that Heaven  
Should give me life, his childhood shall grow up  
Familiar with these songs, that with the night  
He may associate joy.—Once more, farewell,  
Sweet Nightingale ! Once more, my friends, farewell !

CIX

*THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER*\*

(1798)

## PART THE FIRST

It is an ancient Mariner,  
 And he stoppeth one of three.  
 "By thy long grey beard and glittering eye,  
 Now wherefore stopp'st thou me ?

An ancient  
 Mariner  
 meeteth  
 three Gal-  
 lants bidden  
 to a wed-  
 ding-feast,  
 and detain-  
 eth one.

"The Bridegroom's doors are opened wide,  
 And I am next of kin ;  
 The guests are met, the feast is set :  
 May'st hear the merry din."

He holds him with his skinny hand,  
 "There was a ship," quoth he.  
 "Hold off ! unhand me, greybeard loon !"  
 Eftsoons his hand dropt he.

He holds him with his glittering eye—  
 The Wedding-Guest stood still,  
 And listens like a three-years child :  
 The Mariner hath his will.

The Wed-  
 ding-Guest  
 is spell-  
 bound by  
 the eye of  
 the old sea-  
 faring man,  
 and con-  
 strained to  
 hear his tale.

The Wedding-Guest sat on a stone ;  
 He cannot choose but hear ;  
 And thus spake on that ancient man,  
 The bright-eyed Mariner.

The ship was cheered, the harbour cleared,  
Merrily did we drop  
Below the kirk, below the hill,  
Below the lighthouse top.

The Mariner tells how the ship sailed southward with a good wind and fair weather, till it reached the Line.

The Sun came up upon the left,  
Out of the sea came he !  
And he shone bright, and on the right  
Went down into the sea.

Higher and higher every day,  
Till over the mast at noon—  
The Wedding-Guest here beat his breast,  
For he heard the loud bassoon.

The Wedding-Guest heareth the bridal music ; but the Mariner continueth his tale.

The bride hath paced into the hall,  
Red as a rose is she ;  
Nodding their heads before her goes  
The merry minstrelsy.

The Wedding-Guest he beat his breast,  
Yet he cannot choose but hear ;  
And thus spake on that ancient man,  
The bright-eyed Mariner.

The ship drawn by a storm toward the south pole.

“ And now the Storm-blast came, and he  
Was tyrannous and strong :  
He struck with his o’ertaking wings,  
And chased us south along.

With sloping masts and dipping prow,  
As who pursued with yell and blow  
Still treads the shadow of his foe

And forward bends his head,  
The ship drove fast, loud roared the blast,  
And southward aye we fled.

And now there came both mist and snow,  
And it grew wondrous cold :  
And ice, mast-high, came floating by,  
As green as emerald.

And through the drifts the snowy clifts  
Did send a dismal sheen :  
For shapes of men nor beasts we ken—  
The ice was all between.

The land of  
ice and of  
fearful  
sounds,  
where no  
living thing  
was to be  
seen.

The ice was here, the ice was there,  
The ice was all around :  
It cracked and growled, and roared and howled,  
Like noises in a swound !

At length did cross an Albatross,  
Through the fog it came ;  
As if it had been a Christian soul,  
We hailed it in God's name.

Till a great  
sea-bird,  
called the  
Albatross,  
came  
through the  
snow-fog,  
and was re-  
ceived with  
great joy  
and hospi-  
tality.

It ate the food it ne'er had eat,  
And round and round it flew.  
The ice did split with a thunder-fit ;  
The helmsman steered us through !

And lo ! the  
Albatross  
proveth a  
bird of good  
omen, and  
followeth  
the ship as it  
returned  
northward,  
through fog  
and floating  
ice.

And a good south wind sprung up behind ;  
The Albatross did follow,  
And every day, for food or play,  
Came to the mariners' hollo !

In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud,  
 It perched for vespers nine ;  
 Whiles all the night, through fog-smoke white,  
 Glimmered the white Moon-shine."

The ancient  
 Mariner  
 inhospitably  
 killeth the  
 pious bird of  
 good omen.

"God save thee, ancient Mariner,  
 From the fiends, that plague thee thus!—  
 Why look'st thou so ?"—"With my cross-bow  
 I shot the Albatross.

## PART THE SECOND

"THE Sun now rose upon the right :  
 Out of the sea came he,  
 Still hid in mist, and on the left  
 Went down into the sea.

And the good south wind still blew behind,  
 But no sweet bird did follow,  
 Nor any day, for food or play,  
 Came to the mariners' hollo !

His ship-  
 mates cry  
 out against  
 the ancient  
 Mariner, for  
 killing the  
 bird of good  
 luck.

And I had done an hellish thing,  
 And it would work 'em woe :  
 For all averred I had killed the bird  
 That made the breeze to blow.  
 Ah, wretch ! said they, the bird to slay,  
 That made the breeze to blow.

Nor dim nor red, like God's own head,  
 The glorious Sun uprist :

Then all averred I had killed the bird  
That brought the fog and mist.  
'Twas right, said they, such birds to slay,  
That bring the fog and mist.

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,  
The furrow followed free :  
We were the first that ever burst  
Into that silent sea.

Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down,  
'Twas sad as sad could be ;  
And we did speak only to break  
The silence of the sea !

All in a hot and copper sky,  
The bloody Sun, at noon,  
Right up above the mast did stand,  
No bigger than the Moon.

Day after day, day after day,  
We stuck, nor breath nor motion ;  
As idle as a painted ship  
Upon a painted ocean.

Water, water, everywhere,  
And all the boards did shrink ;  
Water, water, everywhere,  
Nor any drop to drink.

The very deep did rot : O Christ !  
That ever this should be !  
Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs  
Upon the slimy sea.

But when  
the fog  
cleared off,  
they justify  
the same,  
and thus  
make them-  
selves ac-  
complices in  
the crime.

The fair  
breeze con-  
tinues ; the  
ship enters  
the Pacific  
Ocean and  
sails north-  
ward, even  
till it reaches  
the Line.

The ship  
hath been  
suddenly be-  
calmed.

And the  
Albatross  
begins to be  
avenged.

About, about, in reel and rout  
 The death-fires danced at night ;  
 The water, like a witch's oils,  
 Burnt green, and blue, and white.

A Spirit had followed them ; one of the invisible inhabitants of this planet, neither departed souls nor angels ; concerning whom the learned Jew, Josephus, and the Platonic Constantinopolitan, Michael Pselus, may be consulted. They are very numerous, and there is no climate or element without one or more.

And some in dreams assurèd were  
 Of the Spirit that plagued us so :  
 Nine fathom deep he had followed us  
 From the land of mist and snow.

And every tongue, through utter drought,  
 Was withered at the root ;  
 We could not speak, no more than if  
 We had been choked with soot.

The ship-mates in their sore distress would fain throw the whole guilt on the ancient Mariner ; in sign whereof they hang the dead sea-bird round his neck.

Ah ! well-a-day ! what evil looks  
 Had I from old and young !  
 Instead of the cross, the Albatross  
 About my neck was hung.

### PART THE THIRD

“THERE passed a weary time. Each throat  
 Was parched, and glazed each eye.  
 A weary time ! a weary time !  
 How glazed each weary eye !  
 When looking westward I beheld  
 A something in the sky.

The ancient Mariner beholdeth a sign in the element afar off.

At first it seemed a little speck,  
 And then it seemed a mist ;  
 It moved and moved, and took at last  
 A certain shape, I wist,

A speck, a mist, a shape, I wist !  
 And still it neared and neared :  
 As if it dodged a water-sprite,  
 It plunged and tacked and veered.

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,  
 We could not laugh nor wail ;  
 Through utter drought all dumb we stood !  
 I bit my arm, I sucked the blood,  
 And cried, A sail ! a sail !

At its nearer approach, it seemeth him to be a ship ; and at a dear ransom he freeth his speech from the bonds of thirst.

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,  
 Agape they heard me call :  
 Gramercy ! they for joy did grin,  
 And all at once their breath drew in,  
 As they were drinking all.

A flash of joy.

See ! see ! (I cried) she tacks no more !  
 Hither to work us weal ;  
 Without a breeze, without a tide,  
 She steadies with upright keel !

And horror follows. For can it be a ship that comes onward without wind or tide ?

The western wave was all a-flame,  
 The day was well-nigh done !  
 Almost upon the western wave  
 Rested the broad, bright Sun ;  
 When that strange shape drove suddenly  
 Betwixt us and the Sun.

It seemeth  
him but the  
skeleton of  
a ship.

And straight the Sun was flecked with bars  
(Heaven's Mother send us grace !),  
As if through a dungeon-grate he peered  
With broad and burning face.

Alas ! (thought I, and my heart beat loud),  
How fast she nears and nears !  
Are those her sails that glance in the Sun,  
Like restless gossameres ?

And its ribs  
are seen as  
bars on the  
face of the  
setting Sun.  
The Spectre-  
Woman and  
her Death-  
mate, and  
no other, on  
board the  
skeleton-  
ship. Like  
vessel, like  
crew !

Are those her ribs through which the Sun  
Did peer, as through a grate ?  
And is that Woman all her crew ?  
Is that a Death ? and are there two ?  
Is Death that Woman's mate ?

Her lips were red, her looks were free,  
Her locks were yellow as gold :  
Her skin was as white as leprosy,  
The Night-Mare Life-in-Death was she,  
Who thicks man's blood with cold.

DEATH and  
Life-in-  
Death have  
diced for  
the ship's  
crew, and  
she (the  
latter) win-  
neth the  
ancient  
Mariner.

The naked hulk alongside came,  
And the twain were casting dice ;  
'The game is done ! I've won ! I've won !'  
Quoth she, and whistles thrice.

No twilight  
within the  
courts of  
the Sun.

The Sun's rim dips ; the stars rush out ;  
At one stride comes the dark ;  
With far-heard whisper, o'er the sea,  
Off shot the spectre-bark.

At the  
rising of  
the Moon,

We listened and looked sideways up !  
Fear at my heart, as at a cup,

My life-blood seemed to sip !  
 The stars were dim, and thick the night,  
 The steersman's face by his lamp gleamed white ;  
 From the sails the dew did drip—  
 Till clomb above the eastern bar  
 The hornèd Moon, with one bright star  
 Within the nether tip.<sup>(1)</sup>

One after one, by the star-dogged Moon,  
 Too quick for groan or sigh,  
 Each turned his face with a ghastly pang,  
 And cursed me with his eye.

One after  
 another,

Four times fifty living men  
 (And I heard nor sign nor groan),  
 With heavy thump, a lifeless lump,  
 They dropped down one by one.

His ship-  
 mates drop  
 down dead.

The souls did from their bodies fly—  
 They fled to bliss or woe !  
 And every soul, it passed me by  
 Like the whizz of my cross-bow ! ”

But Life-in-  
 Death be-  
 gins her  
 work on the  
 ancient  
 Mariner.

## PART THE FOURTH

“ I FEAR thee, ancient Mariner !  
 I fear thy skinny hand !  
 And thou art long, and lank, and brown,  
 As is the ribbed sea-sand.<sup>(2)</sup>

The Wed-  
 ding-Guest  
 feareth that  
 a spirit is  
 talking to  
 him.

I fear thee, and thy glittering eye,  
And thy skinny hand, so brown."—

But the ancient Mariner assureth him of his bodily life, and proceedeth to relate his horrible penance.

"Fear not, fear not, thou Wedding-Guest!  
This body dropt not down.

Alone, alone, all, all alone,  
Alone on a wide, wide sea!  
And never a saint took pity on  
My soul in agony.

He despiseth the creatures of the calm.

The many men, so beautiful!  
And they all dead did lie;  
And a thousand thousand slimy things  
Lived on; and so did I.

And envieth that they should live, and so many lie dead.

I looked upon the rotting sea,  
And drew my eyes away;  
I looked upon the rotting deck,  
And there the dead men lay.

I looked to heaven, and tried to pray;  
But or ever a prayer had gusht,  
A wicked whisper came, and made  
My heart as dry as dust.

I closed my lids, and kept them close,  
And the balls like pulses beat;  
For the sky and the sea, and the sea and the sky,  
Lay like a load on my weary eye,  
And the dead were at my feet.

The cold sweat melted from their limbs,  
 Nor rot nor reek did they :  
 The look with which they looked on me  
 Had never passed away.

But the  
 curse liveth  
 for him in  
 the eye of  
 the dead  
 men.

An orphan's curse would drag to hell  
 A spirit from on high ;  
 But oh ! more horrible than that  
 Is a curse in a dead man's eye !  
 Seven days, seven nights, I saw that curse,  
 And yet I could not die.

The moving Moon went up the sky,  
 And nowhere did abide ;  
 Softly she was going up,  
 And a star or two beside—

In his lone-  
 liness and  
 fixedness he  
 yearneth to-  
 wards the  
 journeying  
 Moon, and

the stars that still sojourn, yet still move onward ; and everywhere the blue sky belongs to them, and is their appointed rest and their native country and their own natural homes, which they enter unannounced, as lords that are certainly expected and yet there is a silent joy at their arrival.

Her beams bemocked the sultry main,  
 Like April hoar-frost spread ;  
 But where the ship's huge shadow lay,  
 The charmèd water burnt alway  
 A still and awful red.

Beyond the shadow of the ship,  
 I watched the water-snakes :  
 They moved in tracks of shining white,  
 And when they reared, the elfish light  
 Fell off in hoary flakes.

By the  
 light of the  
 Moon he  
 beholdeth  
 God's crea-  
 tures of the  
 great calm.

Within the shadow of the ship  
 I watched their rich attire :  
 Blue, glossy green, and velvet black,  
 They coiled and swam ; and every track  
 Was a flash of golden fire.

Their  
 beauty and  
 their happi-  
 ness.

He blesseth  
 them in his  
 heart.

O happy living things ! no tongue  
 Their beauty might declare :  
 A spring of love gushed from my heart,  
 And I blessed them unaware !  
 Sure my kind saint took pity on me,  
 And I blessed them unaware.

The spell  
 begins to  
 break.

The selfsame moment I could pray ;  
 And from my neck so free  
 The Albatross fell off, and sank  
 Like lead into the sea.

## PART THE FIFTH

O ! SLEEP it is a gentle thing,  
 Beloved from pole to pole !  
 To Mary Queen the praise be given !  
 She sent the gentle sleep from Heaven,  
 That slid into my soul.

By grace of  
 the holy  
 Mother, the  
 ancient  
 Mariner is  
 refreshed  
 with rain.

The silly buckets on the deck,  
 That had so long remained,  
 I dreamt that they were filled with dew ;  
 And when I awoke, it rained.

My lips were wet, my throat was cold,  
 My garments all were dank ;  
 Sure I had drunken in my dreams,  
 And still my body drank.

I moved, and could not feel my limbs :  
 I was so light—almost  
 I thought that I had died in sleep,  
 And was a blessèd ghost.

And soon I heard a roaring wind :  
 It did not come anear ;  
 But with its sound it shook the sails,  
 That were so thin and sere.

He heareth  
 sounds and  
 seeth  
 strange  
 sights and  
 commotions  
 in the sky  
 and the ele-  
 ment.

The upper air burst into life ;  
 And a hundred fire-flags sheen ;  
 To and fro they were hurried about !  
 And to and fro, and in and out,  
 The wan stars danced between.

And the coming wind did roar more loud,  
 And the sails did sigh like sedge ;  
 And the rain poured down from one black cloud ;  
 The Moon was at its edge.

The thick black cloud was cleft, and still  
 The Moon was at its side ;  
 Like waters shot from some high crag,  
 The lightning fell with never a jag,  
 A river steep and wide.

The bodies  
of the ship's  
crew are in-  
spired, and  
the ship  
moves on.

The loud wind never reached the ship,  
Yet now the ship moved on !  
Beneath the lightning and the Moon  
The dead men gave a groan.

They groaned, they stirred, they all uprose,  
Nor spake, nor moved their eyes ;  
It had been strange, even in a dream,  
To have seen those dead men rise.

The helmsman steered, the ship moved on ;  
Yet never a breeze up-blew ;  
The mariners all 'gan work the ropes,  
Where they were wont to do ;  
They raised their limbs like lifeless tools—  
We were a ghastly crew.

The body of my brother's son  
Stood by me, knee to knee :  
The body and I pulled at one rope,  
But he said nought to me."

But not by  
the souls of  
the men, nor  
by dæmons  
of earth or  
middle air,  
but by a  
blessed  
troop of  
angelic  
spirits, sent

“ I fear thee, ancient Mariner ! ”  
“ Be calm, thou Wedding-Guest !  
'Twas not those souls that fled in pain,  
Which to their corpses came again,  
But a troop of spirits blest :  
spirits, sent down by the invocation of the guardian saint.

For when it dawned—they dropped their arms  
And clustered round the mast ;  
Sweet sounds rose slowly through their mouths,  
And from their bodies passed.

Around, around, flew each sweet sound,  
 Then darted to the Sun ;  
 Slowly the sounds came back again,  
 Now mixed, now one by one.

Sometimes a-dropping from the sky  
 I heard the skylark sing ;  
 Sometimes all little birds that are,  
 How they seemed to fill the sea and air  
 With their sweet jargoning !

And now 'twas like all instruments,  
 Now like a lonely flute ;  
 And now it is an angel's song,  
 That makes the heavens be mute.

It ceased ; yet still the sails made on  
 A pleasant noise till noon,  
 A noise like of a hidden brook  
 In the leafy month of June,  
 That to the sleeping woods all night  
 Singeth a quiet tune.

Till noon we quietly sailed on,  
 Yet never a breeze did breathe :  
 Slowly and smoothly went the ship,  
 Moved onward from beneath.

Under the keel nine fathom deep,  
 From the land of mist and snow,  
 The Spirit slid : and it was he  
 That made the ship to go.  
 The sails at noon left off their tune,  
 And the ship stood still also.

The lone-  
 some Spirit  
 from the  
 South Pole  
 carries on  
 the ship as  
 far as the  
 Line, in  
 obedience to  
 the angelic  
 troop, but  
 still re-  
 quireth  
 vengeance.

The Sun, right up above the mast,  
 Had fixed her to the ocean :  
 But in a minute she 'gan stir,  
 With a short uneasy motion—  
 Backwards and forwards half her length  
 With a short uneasy motion.

Then like a pawing horse let go,  
 She made a sudden bound :  
 It flung the blood into my head,  
 And I fell down in a swoond.

The Polar Spirit's fellow-dæmons, the invisible inhabitants of the element, take part in his wrong ; and two of them relate, one to the other, that penance long and heavy for the ancient Mariner hath been accorded to the Polar Spirit, who returneth southward.

How long in that same fit I lay,  
 I have not to declare ;  
 But ere my living life returned,  
 I heard, and in my soul discerned  
 Two voices in the air.

' Is it he ? ' quoth one, ' Is this the man ?  
 By Him who died on cross,  
 With his cruel bow he laid full low  
 The harmless Albatross.

The spirit who bideth by himself  
 In the land of mist and snow,  
 He loved the bird that loved the man  
 Who shot him with his bow.'

The other was a softer voice,  
 As soft as honey-dew :  
 Quoth he, ' The man hath penance done,  
 And penance more will do.'

## PART THE SIXTH

(vv. 92-97 omitted)

I WOKE, and we were sailing on  
 As in a gentle weather :  
 'Twas night, calm night, the Moon was high ;  
 The dead men stood together.

The supernatural motion is retarded ; the Mariner awakes, and his penance begins anew.

All stood together on the deck,  
 For a charnel-dungeon fitter :  
 All fixed on me their stony eyes,  
 That in the Moon did glitter.

The pang, the curse, with which they died,  
 Had never passed away :  
 I could not draw my eyes from theirs,  
 Nor turn them up to pray.

And now this spell was snapt : once more  
 I viewed the ocean green,  
 And looked far forth, yet little saw  
 Of what had else been seen—

The curse is finally expiated.

Like one, that on a lonesome road  
 Doth walk in fear and dread,  
 And having once turned round, walks on  
 And turns no more his head ;  
 Because he knows a frightful fiend  
 Doth close behind him tread.

But soon there breathed a wind on me,  
 Nor sound nor motion made :  
 Its path was not upon the sea,  
 In ripple or in shade.

It raised my hair, it fanned my cheek  
 Like a meadow-gale of spring—  
 It mingled strangely with my fears,  
 Yet it felt like a welcoming.

Swiftly, swiftly flew the ship,  
 Yet she sailed softly too :  
 Sweetly, sweetly blew the breeze—  
 On me alone it blew.

And the  
 ancient  
 Mariner  
 beholdeth  
 his native  
 country.

Oh! dream of joy! is this indeed  
 The lighthouse top I see?  
 Is this the hill? is this the kirk?  
 Is this mine own countree?

(vv. 107–109 omitted)

And the bay was white with silent light,  
 Till rising from the same,  
 Full many shapes, that shadows were,  
 In crimson colours came.

The angelic  
 spirits leave  
 the dead  
 bodies,

And appear  
 in their own  
 forms of  
 light.

A little distance from the prow  
 Those crimson shadows were :  
 I turned my eyes upon the deck—  
 Oh, Christ! what saw I there!

Each corse lay flat, lifeless and flat,  
 And, by the holy rood!  
 A man all light, a seraph-man,  
 On every corse there stood.

This seraph-band, each waved his hand :  
 It was a heavenly sight!  
 They stood as signals to the land,  
 Each one a lovely light :

This seraph-band, each waved his hand,  
 No voice did they impart—  
 No voice ; but O, the silence sank  
 Like music on my heart.

But soon I heard the dash of oars,  
 I heard the Pilot's cheer ;  
 My head was turned perforce away,  
 And I saw a boat appear.

The Pilot, and the Pilot's boy,  
 I heard them coming fast :  
 Dear Lord in Heaven ! it was a joy  
 The dead men could not blast.

I saw a third—I heard his voice :  
 It is the Hermit good !  
 He singeth loud his godly hymns  
 That he makes in the wood.  
 He'll shrieve my soul, he'll wash away  
 The Albatross's blood.

## PART THE SEVENTH

(vv. 118-132 omitted)

SINCE then, at an uncertain hour,  
 That agony returns ;  
 And till my ghastly tale is told,  
 This heart within me burns.

And ever  
 and anon  
 throughout  
 his future  
 life an agony  
 constraineth  
 him to travel  
 from land to  
 land,

I pass, like night, from land to land ;  
 I have strange power of speech ;

That moment that his face I see,  
 I know the man that must hear me :  
 To him my tale I teach.

(vv. 135-138 omitted)

And to  
 teach, by  
 his own ex-  
 ample, love  
 and re-  
 verence to  
 all things  
 that God  
 made and  
 loveth.

Farewell, farewell ! but this I tell  
 To thee, thou Wedding-Guest !  
 He prayeth well, who loveth well  
 Both man and bird and beast.

He prayeth best, who loveth best  
 All things both great and small ;  
 For the dear God who loveth us,  
 He made and loveth all."

The Mariner, whose eye is bright,  
 Whose beard with age is hoar,  
 Is gone : and now the Wedding-Guest  
 Turned from the bridegroom's door.

He went like one that hath been stunned,  
 And is of sense forlorn :  
 A sadder and a wiser man,  
 He rose the morrow morn.

CX

*ANSWER TO A CHILD'S QUESTION*

Do you ask what the birds say ? The sparrow, the dove,  
The linnet and thrush say, " I love and I love ! "  
In the winter they're silent—the wind is so strong ;  
What it says I dont know, but it sings a loud song.  
But green leaves and blossoms, and sunny warm weather,  
And singing, and loving—all come back together.  
But the lark is so brimful of gladness and love,  
The green fields below him, the blue sky above,  
That he sings, and he sings ; and for ever sings he—  
" I love my love, and my Love loves me ! "

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH  
(1770-1850)

CXI

*THE GREEN LINNET* \*

BENEATH these fruit-tree boughs that shed  
Their snow-white blossoms on my head,  
With brightest sunshine round me spread  
    Of spring's unclouded weather,  
In this sequestred nook how sweet  
To sit upon my orchard seat,  
And birds and flowers once more to greet,  
    My last year's friends together !

One have I marked, the happiest guest  
In all this covert of the blest :  
Hail to thee, far above the rest  
    In joy of voice and pinion !  
Thou, Linnet, in thy green array,  
Presiding Spirit here to-day,  
Dost lead the revels of the May ;  
    And this is thy dominion.

While birds, and butterflies, and flowers  
Make all one band of paramours,  
Thou, ranging up and down thy bowers,  
    Art sole in thy employment ;  
A Life, a Presence like the air,  
Scattering thy gladness without care,  
Too blest with any one to pair ;  
    Thyself thy own enjoyment.(1)

Amid yon tuft of hazel trees,  
That twinkle to the gusty breeze,  
Behold him perched in ecstasies,  
    Yet seeming still to hover ;  
There ! where the flutter of his wings  
Upon his back and body flings  
Shadows and sunny glimmerings  
    That cover him all over !

My dazzled sight he oft deceives,  
A Brother of the dancing leaves ;  
Then flits, and from the cottage eaves  
    Pours forth his song in gushes ;  
As if by that exulting strain  
He mocked and treated with disdain  
The voiceless Form he chose to feign  
    While fluttering in the bushes.

## CXII

*TO THE CUCKOO \**

O BLITHE new-comer ! I have heard,  
I hear thee and rejoice :  
O Cuckoo ! shall I call thee bird,  
Or but a wandering Voice ?

When I am lying on the grass,  
Thy twofold shout I hear ;  
From hill to hill it seems to pass,  
At once far off and near.

Though babbling only to the vale  
Of sunshine and of flowers,  
Thou bringest unto me a tale  
Of visionary hours.

Thrice welcome, darling of the Spring !  
Even yet thou art to me  
No bird, but an invisible thing,  
A voice, a mystery ;

The same whom in my school-boy days  
I listened to ; that Cry  
Which made me look a thousand ways  
In bush, and tree, and sky.

To seek thee did I often rove  
Through woods and on the green ;  
And thou wert still a hope, a love ;  
Still longed for, never seen !

And I can listen to thee yet ;  
    Can lie upon the plain  
And listen, till I do beget  
    That golden time again.

O blessèd bird ! the earth we pace  
    Again appears to be  
An unsubstantial, fairy place  
    That is fit home for thee !

## CXIII

*TO THE CUCKOO \**

NOT the whole warbling grove in concert heard  
When sunshine follows shower, the breast can thrill  
Like the first summons, Cuckoo ! of thy bill,  
With its twin notes inseparably paired.  
The captive 'mid damp vaults unsunned, unaired,  
Measuring the periods of his lonely doom,  
That cry can reach ; and to the sick man's room  
Sends gladness, by no languid smile declared.  
The eagle-face through hostile search  
May perish ; time may come when never more  
The wilderness shall hear the lion roar ;  
But long as cock shall crow from household perch  
To rouse the dawn, soft gales shall speed thy wing,  
And thy erratic voice be faithful to the Spring !

## CXIV

*THE WILD DUCK'S NEST* \*

THE imperial Consort of the Fairy-King  
Owns not a sylvan bower, or gorgeous cell  
With emerald floored, and with purpureal shell  
Ceilinged and roofed, that is so fair a thing  
As this low structure, for the tasks of Spring  
Prepared by one who loves the buoyant swell  
Of the brisk waves, yet here consents to dwell ;  
And spreads in steadfast peace her brooding wing.  
Words cannot paint the o'ershadowing yew-tree bough,  
And dimly-gleaming nest—a hollow crown  
Of golden leaves inlaid with silver down,  
Fine as the mother's softest plumes allow :  
I gazed—and self-accused while gazing, sighed  
For human-kind, weak slaves of cumbrous pride !

CXV

## TO THE SKYLARK

ETHEREAL minstrel ! pilgrim of the sky !  
Dost thou despise the earth where cares abound ?  
Or while the wings aspire, are heart and eye  
Both with thy nest upon the dewy ground ?  
Thy nest which thou canst drop into at will,  
Those quivering wings composed, that music still !

To the last point of vision and beyond  
Mount, daring warbler !—that love-prompted strain  
'Twixt thee and thine a never failing bond—  
Thrills not the less the bosom of the plain :  
Yet might'st thou seem, proud privilege ! to sing  
All independent of the leafy Spring.

Leave to the nightingale her shady wood ;  
A privacy of glorious light is thine,  
Whence thou dost pour upon the world a flood  
Of harmony, with instinct more divine ;  
Type of the wise, who soar, but never roam—  
True to the kindred points of Heaven and Home.<sup>(1)</sup>

CXVI

*THE TROSSACHS \**

THERE'S not a nook within this solemn Pass,  
But were an apt confessional for One  
Taught by his summer spent, his autumn gone,  
That life is but a tale of morning grass  
Withered at eve. From scenes of art which chase  
That thought away, turn, and with watchful eyes  
Feed it 'mid Nature's old felicities,  
Rocks, rivers, and smooth lakes more clear than glass  
Untouched, unbreathed upon. Thrice happy quest,  
If from a golden perch of aspen spray  
(October's workmanship to rival May)  
The pensive warbler of the ruddy breast  
That moral sweeten by a heaven-taught lay,  
Lulling the year, with all its cares, to rest !

## CXVII

*WATER FOWL \**

MARK how the feathered tenants of the flood,  
With grace of motion that might scarcely seem  
Inferior to the angelical, prolong  
Their curious pastime! shaping in mid air  
(And sometimes with ambitious wing that soars  
High as the level of the mountain tops)  
A circuit ampler than the lakes beneath  
Their own domain; but ever while intent  
On tracing and retracing that large round,  
Their jubilant activity evolves  
Hundreds of curves and circles, to and fro,  
Upward and downward, progress intricate  
Yet unperplexed, as if one spirit swayed  
Their undefatigable flight. 'Tis done!  
Ten times or more, I fancied it had ceased;  
But lo! the vanished company again  
Ascending, they approach—I hear their wings  
Faint, faint at first; and then an eager sound,  
Past in a moment, and as faint again!  
They tempt the sun to sport amid their plumes;  
They tempt the water, or the gleaming ice  
To show them a fair image;—'tis themselves,  
Their own fair forms, upon the glimmering plain,  
Painted more soft and fair as they descend  
Almost to touch; then up again aloft,  
Up with a sally and a flash of speed,  
As if they scorned both resting-place and rest.

## CXVIII

*THE NIGHTINGALE\**

O NIGHTINGALE ! thou surely art  
A creature of a " fiery heart " :—  
These notes of thine—they pierce and pierce ;  
Tumultuous harmony and fierce !  
Thou sing'st as if the God of wine  
Had helped thee to a Valentine ;  
A song in mockery and despite  
Of shades and dews, and silent night ;  
And steady bliss, and all the loves  
Now sleeping in these peaceful groves.

I heard a Stock-dove (<sup>1</sup>) sing or say  
His homely tale, this very day ;  
His voice was buried among trees,  
Yet to be come-at by the breeze :  
He did not cease ; but cooed—and cooed ;  
And somewhat pensively he wooed :  
He sang of love, with quiet blending,  
Slow to begin and never ending ;  
Of serious faith and inward glee ;  
This was the song—the song for me !

CXIX

## EAGLES \*

*(Composed at Dunollie Castle in the Bay of Oban)*

DISHONOURED Rock and Ruin ! that, by law  
Tyrannic, keep the Bird of Jove embarred  
Like a lone criminal whose life is spared.  
Vexed is he, and screams loud. The last I saw  
Was on the wing ; stooping, he struck with awe  
Man, bird and beast ; then, with a consort paired,  
From a bold headland, their loved eerie's guard,  
Flew high above Atlantic waves, to draw  
Light from the fountain of the setting sun.  
Such was this Prisoner once ; and, when his plumes  
The sea-blast ruffles as the storm comes on,  
Then, for a moment, he, in spirit resumes  
His rank 'mong freeborn creatures that live free,  
His power, his beauty, and his majesty.

THOMAS CAMPBELL

(1777-1844)

CXX

*THE PARROT \**

A PARROT, from the Spanish main,  
Full young and early caged came o'er,  
With bright wings to the bleak domain  
Of Mulla's shore.

To spicy groves where he had won  
His plumage of resplendent hue,  
His native fruits, and skies, and sun,  
He bade adieu.

For these he changed the smoke of turf,  
A heathery land and misty sky,  
And turned on rocks and raging surf  
His golden eye.

But petted in our climate cold,  
He lived and chattered many a day :  
Until with age, from green and gold  
His wings grew grey.

At last when blind, and seeming dumb,  
He scolded, laughed, and spoke no more,  
A Spanish stranger chanced to come  
To Mulla's shore ;

He hailed the bird in Spanish speech,  
The bird in Spanish speech replied ;  
Flapped round the cage with joyous screech,  
Dropt down, and died.

SAMUEL ROGERS

(1763-1855)

CXXI

*EPITAPH ON A ROBIN REDBREAST \**

TREAD lightly here, for here, 'tis said,  
When piping winds are hushed around,  
A small note wakes from underground,  
Where now his tiny bones are laid.  
No more in lone or leafless groves,  
With ruffled wing and faded breast,  
His friendless, homeless spirit roves ;  
Gone to the world where birds are blest !  
Where never cat glides o'er the green,  
Or school-boy's giant form is seen <sup>(1)</sup> ;  
But love, and joy, and smiling Spring  
Inspire their little souls to sing.

EDGAR ALLAN POE  
(1809-1849)

CXXII

*THE RAVEN* \*

ONCE upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak  
and weary,

Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore—  
While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a  
tapping,

As of someone gently rapping, rapping at my chamber  
door.

“ ’Tis some visitor,” I muttered, “ tapping at my chamber  
door—

Only this and nothing more.”

Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the bleak December,  
And each separate dying ember wrought its ghost upon  
the floor.

Eagerly I wished the morrow—vainly I had sought to  
borrow

From my books surcease of sorrow—sorrow for the lost  
Lenore—

For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name  
Lenore—

Nameless here for evermore.

And the silken sad uncertain rustling of each purple curtain  
Thrilled me—filled me with fantastic terrors never felt  
before :

So that now, to still the beating of my heart, I stood  
repeating,

“ ’Tis some visitor entreating entrance at my chamber  
door—

Some late visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door—  
This it is and nothing more.”

Presently my soul grew stronger ; hesitating then no longer,  
“ Sir,” said I, “ or Madam, truly your forgiveness I implore ;  
But the fact is I was napping, and so gently you came  
rapping,

And so faintly you came tapping, tapping at my chamber  
door,

That I scarce was sure I heard you——” Here I opened  
wide the door—

Darkness there and nothing more.

Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there wonder-  
ing, fearing,

Doubtless, dreaming dreams no mortal ever dared to dream  
before ;

But the silence was unbroken, and the stillness gave no  
token,

And the only word there spoken was the whispered word  
“ Lenore ! ”—

Merely this and nothing more.

Back into the chamber turning, all my soul within me  
burning,

Soon again I heard a tapping, something louder than  
before.

“ Surely,” said I, “ surely that is something at my window  
lattice ;

Let me see, then, what thereat is, and this mystery  
explore—

Let my heart be still a moment, and this mystery explore—

’Tis the wind and nothing more.”

Open here I flung the shutter, when, with many a flirt and  
flutter,

In there stepped a stately Raven of the saintly days of yore—

Not the least obeisance made he ; not a minute stopped or stayed he ;

But, with mien of lord or lady perched above my chamber door—

Perched upon a bust of Pallas just above my chamber door —

Perched and sat and nothing more.

Then this ebony bird beguiling my sad fancy into smiling,  
By the grave and stern decorum of the countenance it wore,

“ Though thy crest be shorn and shaven, thou,” I said,  
“ art sure no craven,

Ghastly grim and ancient Raven, wandering from the  
nightly shore—

Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night’s Plutonian  
shore ! ”

Quoth the Raven : “ Nevermore.”

Much I marvelled this ungainly fowl to hear discourse so  
plainly,

Though its answer little meaning—little relevancy bore ;  
For we cannot help agreeing that no living human being  
Ever yet was blessed with seeing bird above his chamber  
door—

Bird or beast upon the sculptured bust above his chamber  
door,

With such name as “ Nevermore.”

But the Raven, sitting lonely on that placid bust, spoke  
only

That one word, as if his soul in that one word he did outpour.  
Nothing further then he uttered ; not a feather then he  
fluttered—

Till I scarcely more than muttered, "Other friends have  
flown before—

On the morrow *he* will leave me, as my hopes have flown  
before!"

Then the bird said: "Nevermore."

Startled at the stillness broken by reply so aptly spoken,  
"Doubtless," said I. "What it utters is its only stock  
and store,

Caught from some unhappy master, whom unmerciful  
disaster

Followed fast and followed faster, till his songs one burden  
bore—

Till the dirges of his Hope that melancholy burden bore  
Of "Never—nevermore."

But the Raven still beguiling all my sad soul into smiling,  
Straight I wheeled a cushioned seat in front of bird, and  
bust, and door;

Then, upon the velvet sinking, I betook myself to linking  
Fancy unto fancy, thinking what this ominous bird of  
yore—

What this grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt, and ominous  
bird of yore

Meant in croaking "Nevermore."

Thus I sat engaged in guessing, but no syllable expressing  
To the fowl whose fiery eyes now burned into my bosom's  
core;

This and more I sat divining, with my head at ease re-  
clining,

On the cushion's velvet lining that the lamplight gloated  
o'er,

But whose velvet violet lining with the lamplight gloating  
o'er,

*She* shall press, ah, nevermore !

Then, methought, the air grew denser, perfumed from an  
unseen censer

Swung by seraphim whose footfalls tinkled on the tufted  
floor.

“Wretch,” I cried, “thy God hath lent thee—by these  
angels he hath sent thee,

Respite—respite and nepenthe from thy memories of  
Lenore !

Quaff, oh quaff this kind nepenthe and forget this lost  
Lenore !”

Quoth the Raven : “Nevermore.”

“Prophet,” said I, “thing of evil ;—prophet still, if bird  
or devil !

Whether Tempter sent, or whether Tempest tossed thee  
here ashore,

Desolate, yet all undaunted, on this desert land enchanted—  
On this home by Horror haunted—tell me truly, I im-  
plore—

Is there—*is* there balm in Gilead ?—tell me—tell me, I  
implore !”

Quoth the Raven : “Nevermore.”

“Prophet,” said I, “thing of evil—prophet still, if bird or  
devil !

By that Heaven that bends above us—by that God we  
both adore—

Tell this soul with sorrow laden, if, within the distant  
Aiden,

It shall clasp a sainted maiden, whom the angels name  
‘Lenore’—

Clasp a rare and radiant maiden, whom the angels name  
Lenore.”

Quoth the Raven : “ Nevermore.”

“ Be that word our sign of parting, bird or fiend ! ” I  
shrieked, upstarting—

“ Get thee back into the tempest, and the Night’s Plutonian  
shore !

Leave no black plume as a token of that lie thy soul hath  
spoken !

Leave my loneliness unbroken !—quit the bust above my  
door !—

Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from  
off my door ! ”

Quoth the Raven : “ Nevermore.”

And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting  
On the pallid bust of Pallas, just above my chamber door ;  
And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon’s that is  
dreaming,

And the lamplight o’er him streaming, throws his shadow  
on the floor ;

And my soul, from out that shadow that lies floating on  
the floor,

Shall be lifted—nevermore.

GEORGE DARLEY  
(1795-1846)

CXXIII

*THE HOOPOE\**

SOLITARY wayfarer !  
Minstrel winged of the green wild !  
What dost thou delaying here,  
Like a wood-bewildered child  
Weeping to his far-flown troop,  
Whoop ! and plaintive whoop ! and whoop ?  
Now from rock and now from tree,  
Bird ! methinks thou whoop'st to me,  
Flitting before me upward still  
With clear warble, as I've heard  
Oft on my native Northern hill  
No less wild and lone a bird,  
Luring me with his sweet chee-chee  
Up the mountain crags which he  
Tript as lightly as a bee,  
O'er steep pastures, far among  
Thickets and briary lanes along,  
Following still a fleeting song !  
If such my errant nature, I  
Vainly to curb or coop it try  
Now that the sun-drop through my frame  
Kindles another soul of flame !  
Whoop on, whoop on, thou canst not wing  
Too fast or far, thou well-named thing,  
Hoopoe, if of that tribe which sing  
Articulate in the desert ring !

CXXIV

*THE PHŒNIX* \*

O BLEST unfabled Incense Tree,  
That burns in glorious Araby,  
With red scent chalicng the air,  
Till earth-life grow Elysian there !

Half buried to her flaming breast  
In this bright tree, she makes her nest,  
Hundred-sunn'd Phœnix ! when she must  
Crumble at length to hoary dust !

Her gorgeous death-bed ! her rich pyre  
Burnt up with aromatic fire !  
Her urn sight-high from spoiler men !  
Her birthplace when self-born again !

The mountainless green wilds among,  
Here ends she her unechoing song !  
With amber tears and odorous sighs  
Mourn'd by the desert where she dies !

Laid like the young fawn mossily  
In sun-green vales of Araby,  
I woke hard by the Phœnix tree  
That with shadeless boughs flamed over me,  
And upward call'd for a dumb cry  
With moonbroad orbs of wonder I  
Beheld the immortal Bird on high  
Glassing the great sun in her eye.  
Stedfast she gazed upon his fire,—  
Still her destroyer and her sire !—

As if to his her soul of flame  
Had flown already whence it came ;  
Like those that sit and glare so still,  
Intense with their death struggle, till  
We touch, and curdle at their chill !—  
But breathing yet while she doth burn,  
The deathless Daughter of the sun !  
Slowly to crimson embers turn  
The beauties of the brightsome one.  
O'er the broad nest her silver wings  
Shook down their wasteful glitterings ;  
Her brinded neck high-arch'd in air  
Like a small rainbow faded there ;  
But brighter glow'd her plummy crown  
Mouldering to golden ashes down ;  
With fume of sweet woods, to the skies,  
Pure as a Saint's adoring sighs,  
Warm as a prayer in Paradise,  
Her life-breath rose in sacrifice !  
The while with shrill triumphant tone  
Sounding aloud, aloft, alone,  
Ceaseless her joyful deathwail she  
Sang to departing Araby !

O fast her amber blood doth flow  
From the heart-wounded Incense Tree,  
Fast as earth's deep-embosom'd woe  
In silent rivulets to the sea !

Beauty may weep her fair first-born,  
Perchance in as resplendent tears,  
Such golden dewdrops bow the corn  
When the stern sickleman appears :

## GEORGE DARLEY

But O! such perfume to a bower  
Never allured sweet-seeking bee,  
As to sip fast that nectarous shower  
A thirstier minstrel drew in me!

THOMAS LOVELL BEDDOES

(1803-1849)

CXXV

*WOLFRAM'S SONG \**

OLD Adam, the carrion crow,  
The old crow of Cairo ;  
He sat in the shower, and let it flow  
Under his tail and over his crest ;  
And through every feather  
Leak'd the wet weather ;  
And the bough swung under his nest ;  
For his beak it was heavy with marrow ;  
Is that the wind dying ? O no ;  
It's only two devils, that blow  
Through a murderer's bones, to and fro,  
In the ghosts' moonshine.

Ho, Eve, my grey carrion wife,  
When we have supped on kings' marrow,  
Where shall we drink and make merry our life ?  
Our nest it is Queen Cleopatra's skull,  
'Tis cloven and crack'd,  
And batter'd and hack'd,  
But with tears of blue eyes it is full ;  
Let us drink then, my raven of Cairo !  
Is that the wind dying ? O no ;  
It's only two devils, that blow  
Through a murderer's bones, to and fro,  
In the ghosts' moonshine.

FRANCIS ADAMS

(1862-1893)

CXXVI

*THE RAPE OF THE NEST* \*

IN early spring I watched two sparrows build,  
And then their nest within the thickest hedge  
Construct, two small dear mates within whose life  
And love, foreshadowed and foreshadowing, I  
Had some sweet underpart. And so at last  
The little round blue eggs were laid, and her post  
The mother brooding kept, while far and wide  
He sought the food for both, or, weariness  
Compelling her, he changed and kept his post  
Within the nest, and she flew forth in turn.

One day, a schoolboy, or some other, came  
And caught her, took the eggs, and tore the nest,  
And went his way. Then, as I stood looking  
Through gathering tears and sobs, all swiftly winged,  
Food-bearing, came the lover back, and flew  
Into the thickest hedge. How shall we say  
How the sweet mate lost for ever, the ruined home,  
And the hope of young, with all life's life and light  
Quenched at a moment for ever, were to him ?  
For grief like this grows dumb, deeper than words,  
And man and animal are only one.

JOHN CLARE  
(1793-1864)

CXXVII

*THE THRUSH'S NEST*

WITHIN a thick and spreading hawthorn bush  
That overhung a molehill large and round,  
I heard from morn to morn a merry thrush  
Sing hymns to sunrise, and I drank the sound  
With joy ; and, often an intruding guest,  
I watched her secret toils from day to day—  
How true she warped the moss, to form a nest,  
And modelled it within with wood and clay ;  
And by and by, like heath-bells gilt with dew,  
There lay her shining eggs, as bright as flowers,  
Ink-spotted over shells of greeny blue ;  
And there I witnessed in the sunny hours  
A brood of nature's minstrels chirp and fly,  
Glad as the sunshine and the laughing sky.

## CXXVIII

*EMMONSAIL'S HEATH IN WINTER*

I LOVE to see the old heath's withered brake  
Mingle its crimped leaves with furze and ling,  
While the old heron from the lonely lake  
Starts slow and flaps his melancholy wing,  
And oddling crow in idle motions swing  
On the half rotten ashtree's topmost twig,  
Beside whose trunk the gipsy makes his bed.  
Up flies the bouncing woodcock from the brig  
Where a black quagmire quakes beneath the tread,  
The fieldfares chatter in the whistling thorn  
And for the awe round fields and closen rove,  
And coy bumbarrels (<sup>1</sup>) twenty in a drove  
Flit down the hedgerows in the frozen plain  
And hang on little twigs and start again.

## CXXIX

*LITTLE TROTTY WAGTAIL \**

LITTLE trotty wagtail he went in the rain,  
And tittering, tottering sideways he ne'er got straight again,  
He stooped to get a worm, and looked up to get a fly,  
And then he flew away ere his feathers they were dry.

Little trotty wagtail, he waddled in the mud,  
And left his little footmarks, trample where he would.  
He waddled in the water-pudge, and waggle went his tail  
And chirrupt up his wings to dry upon the garden rail.

Little trotty wagtail, you nimble all about,  
And in the dimpling water-pudge you waddle in and out ;  
Your home is nigh at hand, and in the warm pig-stye,  
So little Master Wagtail, I'll bid you a good-bye.

CXXX

*THE SKYLARK \**

ABOVE the russet clods the corn is seen  
Sprouting its spiry points of tender green,  
Where squats the hare, to terrors wide awake,  
Like some brown clod the harriers failed to break.  
Opening their golden caskets to the sun,  
The buttercups make schoolboys eager run,  
To see who shall be first to pluck the prize—  
Up from their hurry see the Skylark flies,  
And o'er her half-formed nest, with happy wings,  
Winnows the air till in the cloud she sings,  
Then hangs a dust spot in the sunny skies,  
And drops and drops till in her nest she lies,  
Which they unheeded passed—not dreaming then  
That birds, which flew so high, would drop again  
To nests upon the ground, which anything  
May come at to destroy. Had they the wing  
Like such a bird, themselves would be too proud  
And build on nothing but a passing cloud !  
As free from danger as the heavens are free  
From pain and toil, there would they build and be,  
And sail about the world to scenes unheard  
Of and unseen,—O were they but a bird !  
So think they, while they listen to its song,  
And smile and fancy and so pass along ;  
While its low nest, moist with the dews of morn,  
Lies safely, with the leveret, in the corn.

CXXXI

## FROM "SPEAR THISTLE"

THE pewit, swopping up and down  
And screaming round the passer bye,  
Or running o'er the herbage brown  
With cottle crown uplifted high,  
Loves in its clumps to make a home  
Where danger seldom cares to come.

The yellowhammer, often prest  
For spot to build and be unseen,  
Will in its shelter trust her nest  
When fields and meadows glow with green ;  
And larks, though paths go closely bye,  
Will in its shade securely lie.

The partridge too, that scarce can trust  
The open downs to be at rest,  
Will in its clumps lie down, and dust  
And prune its horseshoe-circled breast,  
And oft in shining fields of green  
Will lay and raise its brood unseen.

The sheep when hunger presses sore  
May nip the clover round its nest ;  
But soon the thistle wounding sore  
Relieves it from each brushing guest,  
That leaves a bit of wool behind,  
The yellowhammer loves to find.

The horse will set his foot and bite  
Close to the ground lark's guarded nest  
And snort to meet the prickly sight ;  
He fans the feathers of her breast—  
Yet thistles prick so deep that he  
Turns back and leaves her dwelling free.

## CXXXII

## FROM "SONG'S ETERNITY" \*

MIGHTY songs that miss decay,  
What are they ?  
Crowds and cities pass away  
Like a day.  
Books are out and books are read ;  
What are they ?  
Years will lay them with the dead—  
Sigh, sigh ;  
Trifles unto nothing wed,  
They die.  
Dreamers, mark the honey bee ;  
Mark the tree  
Where the blue cap " tootle tee "   
Sings a glee  
Sung to Adam and to Eve—  
Here they be.  
When floods covered every bough,  
Noah's ark  
Heard that ballad, singing now ;  
Hark, hark,  
" Tootle tootle tootle tee "—  
Can it be  
Pride and fame must shadows be ?  
Come and see—  
Every season own her own ;  
Bird and bee  
Sing creation's music on ;  
Nature's glee  
Is in every mood and tone  
Eternity.

## CXXXIII

*THE FIRETAIL'S NEST*

“TWEET,” pipes the robin as the cat creeps by  
Her nestling young that in the elderns lie,  
And then the bluecap tootles in its glee,  
Picking the flies from orchard apple tree,  
And “pink” the chaffinch cries its well-known strain,  
Urging its kind to utter “pink” again,  
While in a quiet mood hedgesparrows try  
An inward stir of shadowed melody.  
Around the rotten tree the firetail mourns  
As the old hedger to his toil returns,  
Chopping the grain to stop the gap close by  
The hole where her blue eggs in safety lie.  
Of everything that stirs she dreameth wrong  
And pipes her “tweet tut” fears the whole day long.

## CXXXIV

*QUAIL'S NEST \**

I WANDERED out one rainy day  
And heard a bird with merry joys  
Cry "wet my foot" for half the way ;  
I stood and wondered at the noise,

When from my foot a bird did flee—  
The rain flew bouncing from her breast—  
I wondered what the bird could be,  
And almost trampled on her nest.

The nest was full of eggs and round—  
I met a shepherd in the vales,  
And stood to tell him what I found,  
He knew and said it was a quail's.

For he himself the nest had found,  
Among the wheat and on the green,  
When going on his daily round,  
With eggs as many as fifteen.<sup>(1)</sup>

Among the stranger birds they feed,  
Their summer flight is short and low ;  
There's very few know where they breed,  
And scarcely any where they go.

CXXXV

*THE YELLOWHAMMER*

WHEN shall I see the white-thorn leaves agen,  
    And yellowhammers gathering the dry bents  
By the dyke-side, on stilly moor or fen,  
    Feathered with love and nature's good intents ?  
Rude is the tent this architect invents,  
    Rural the place, with cart ruts by dyke side.  
Dead grass, horse hair, and downy-headed bents  
    Tied to dead thistles—she doth well provide,  
Close to a hill of ants where cowslips bloom  
    And shed o'er meadows far their sweet perfume.  
In early spring, when winds blow chilly cold,  
    The yellowhammer, trailing grass, will come  
To fix a place and choose an early home,  
    With yellow breast and head of solid gold.<sup>(1)</sup>

## CXXXVI

*BIRDS, WHY ARE YE SILENT?\**

WHY are ye silent,  
 Birds? Where do ye fly?  
 Winter's not violent,  
 With such a Spring sky.

The wheatlands are green, snow and frost are away;  
 Birds, why are ye silent on such a sweet day?

By the slated pig-stye,  
 The redbreast scarce whispers:  
 Where last Autumn's leaves lie,  
 The hedgesparrow just lispers.  
 And why are the chaffinch and bullfinch so still,  
 While the sulphur primroses bedeck the wood hill?

The bright yellowhammers—  
 Are strutting about,  
 All still, and none stammers  
 A single note out.  
 From the hedge starts the blackbird, at brookside to drink:  
 I thought he'd have whistled, but he only said "prink."

The tree-creeper hustles  
 Up fir's rusty bark;  
 All silent he bustles;  
 We needn't say hark.  
 There's no song in the forest, in field or in wood,  
 Yet the sun gilds the grass as though come in for good.

How bright the odd daisies  
 Peep under the stubbs !  
 How bright pilewort blazes  
 Where ruddled sheep rubs  
 The old willow trunk by the side of the brook  
 Where soon for blue violets the children will look.

By the cot green and mossy  
 Feed sparrow and hen :  
 On the ridge brown and glossy  
 They chuck now and then.  
 The wren cocks his tail o'er his back by the stye,  
 Where his green bottle nest will be made by and by.

Here's bunches of chickweed,  
 With small starry flowers,  
 Where redcaps (1) oft pick seeds  
 In hungry spring hours ;  
 And bluecap and blackcap,(2) in glossy spring coat,  
 Are a-peeping in buds without singing a note.

Why silent should birds be  
 And sunshine so warm ?  
 Larks hide where the herds be  
 By cottage and farm.  
 If wild flowers were blooming and fully set in the spring,  
 May-be all the birdies would cheerfully sing.

## CXXXVII

## TO THE LARK \*

## I

BIRD of the morn,  
When roseate clouds begin  
    To show the opening dawn,  
Thy singing does begin,  
And o'er the sweet green fields and happy vales  
Thy pleasant song is heard, mixed with the morning gales.

## 2

Bird of the morn,  
What time the ruddy sun  
    Smiles on the pleasant corn  
Thy singing is begun,  
Heartfelt and cheering over labourers' toil,  
Who chop in coppice wild and delve the russet soil.

## 3

Bird of the sun,  
How beautiful art thou !  
    When morning has begun  
    To gild the mountain's brow,  
How beautiful it is to see thee soar so blest,  
Winnowing thy russet wings above thy twitchy nest.

## 4

Bird of the summer's day,  
How oft I stand to hear  
    Thee sing thy airy lay,  
    With music wild and clear,  
Till thou become a speck upon the sky,  
Small as the clods that crumble where I lie.

5

Thou bird of happiest song,  
The spring and summer too  
Are thine, the months along,  
The woods and vales to view.  
If climes were evergreen thy song would be  
The sunny music of eternal glee.

## CXXXVIII

*LOVE'S CONSTANCY \**

THE dove shall be a hawk in kind,  
The cuckoo change its tune,  
The nightingale at Christmas sing,  
The fieldfare come in June,  
Ere I do change my love for thee,  
These things shall change as soon.

So keep your heart at ease, my love,  
Nor waste a joy for me ;  
I'll ne'er prove false to thee, my love,  
Till fish drown in the sea,  
And birds forget to fly, my love,  
And then I'll think of thee.

The redcock's wing may turn to grey,  
The crow's to silver white,  
The night itself may be for day,  
And sunshine wake at night  
Till then—and then I'll prove more true  
Than nature, life, and light.

ELIZA COOK  
(1818-1889)

CXXXIX

*THE SONG OF THE CARRION CROW \**

My roost is the creaking gibbet's beam,  
Where the murderer's bones swing bleaching ;  
Where the chattering chain rings back again  
To the night-wind's desolate screeching.

To and fro, as the fierce gusts blow,  
Merrily rocked am I ;  
And I note with delight the traveller's fright,  
As he cowers and hastens by.

I have fluttered where secret work has been done,  
Wrought with a trusty blade ;  
But what did I care, whether foul or fair,  
If I shared the feast it made ?

I plunged my beak in the marbling cheek,  
I perched on the clammy brow,  
And a dainty treat was that fresh meat  
To the greedy Carrion Crow.

I have followed the traveller dragging on  
O'er the mountains long and cold :  
For I knew at last he must sink in the blast,  
Though spirit was never so bold.

He fell, and slept like a fair young bride,  
In his winding sheet of snow ;  
And quickly his breast had a table guest  
In the hungry Carrion Crow.

Famine and Plague bring joy to me,  
For I love the harvest they yield ;—  
And the fairest sight I ever see  
Is the crimson battle-field.

Far and wide is my charnel range,  
And rich carousel I keep,  
Till back I come to my gibbet's home,  
To be merrily rocked to sleep.

When the world shall be spread with tombless dead  
And darkness shroud all below,  
What triumph and glee to the last will be  
For the sateless Carrion Crow !

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING  
(1806-1861)

CXL

*FAREWELLS FROM PARADISE : BIRD-SPIRIT*

I AM the nearest nightingale  
That singeth in Eden after you ;  
And I am singing loud and true,  
And sweet,—I do not fail.  
I sit upon a cypress bough,  
Close to the gate, and I fling my song  
Over the gate and through the mail  
Of the warden angels marshall'd strong,—  
Over the gate and after you !  
And the warden angels let it pass,  
Because the poor brown bird, alas,  
Sings in the garden, sweet and true.  
And I build my song of high pure notes,  
Note after note, height over height,  
Till I strike the arch of the Infinite,  
And I bridge abysmal agonies  
With strong clear calms of harmonies,—  
And something abides, and something floats,  
In the song which I sing after you.  
Fare ye well, farewell !

The creature-sounds, no longer audible,  
Expire at Eden's door.  
Each footstep of your treading  
Treads out some cadence which ye heard before.  
Farewell ! the birds of Eden  
Ye shall hear nevermore.

ROBERT BROWNING

(1812-1889)

CXLI

*THIS IS A SPRAY . . . \**

THIS is a spray the bird clung to,  
Making it blossom with pleasure,  
Ere the high tree-top she sprung to,  
Fit for her nest and her treasure.  
Oh, what a hope beyond measure  
Was the poor spray's, which the flying feet hung to,—  
So to be singled out, built in and sung to!

“OWEN MEREDITH”

(1803-1873)

CXLII

*THE EAGLE'S JOURNEY \**

FROM this grey crag in ether islanded,  
I once at dawn, before the dark was done,  
Full east my solitary pinions spread,  
Seeking the sunken sources of the sun.  
Chill o'er me hung the icy heavens, all black  
Behind their fretted webs of fluttering gold.  
Beneath me growl'd the grey unbottomed sea,  
Inwardly shuddering. O'er her monstrous back  
With restless weary shrugs in rapid fold  
Her many-wrinkled mantle shifted she ;  
And scraped her craggy bays, and fiercely flung  
Their stones about, and scraped them back again ;  
Gnawing and licking with mad tooth and tongue  
The granite guardians of her drear domain.  
Faint in transparent twilight where I gazed,  
Hover'd a far-off flakelet of firm land.  
Barely chin-high above the waters raised,  
Peered the pale forehead of that spectral strand.  
Thither I winged my penetrative flight :  
The phantom coast, uncoiling many a twist  
Of ghostly cable, as a diver might,  
Swam slowly out to meet me, moist with spray.  
But, ere I reach'd it, like a witch, the night  
Had melted, first into a mist  
Of melancholy amethyst,  
Then utterly away.  
And all around me was the large clear light  
And crystal calm of the capacious day.

HENRY KINGSLEY

(1830-1876)

CXLIII

*MAGDALEN* \*

MAGDALEN at Michael's gate

Tirlèd at the pin ;<sup>(1)</sup>

On Joseph's thorn sang the blackbird,

" Let her in ! Let her in ! "

" Hast thou seen the wounds ? " said Michael,

" Know'st thou thy sin ? "

" It is evening, evening," sang the blackbird,

" Let her in ! Let her in ! "

" Yes, I have seen the wounds,

And I know my sin."

" She knows it well, well, well," sang the blackbird,

" Let her in ! Let her in ! "

" Thou bringest no offerings," said Michael.

" Nought save sin."

And the blackbird sang, " She is sorry, sorry, sorry,

Let her in ! Let her in ! "

When he had sung himself to sleep,

And night did begin,

One came and open'd Michael's gate,

And Magdalen went in.

SYDNEY DOBELL

(1824-1874)

CXLIV

*THE SWALLOW \**

SWALLOW, that yearly art blown round the world,  
What seekest thou that never may be found ?  
Whither for ever sailing and to sail ?  
I think the gulfs have sucked thine haven down,  
And thou still steerest for the vanished strand  
What cheer, what cheer ! oh fairy marinere (')  
Of windy billows, sea-mew of the air ?  
The viewless oceans wash thee to and fro,  
Spout thee to Heaven, and dive thee to the deep :  
Swallow, I also seek and do not find.

WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT

(1794-1878)

CXLV

*TO A WATERFOWL \**

WHITHER, midst falling dew,  
While glow the heavens with the last steps of day,  
Far, through their rosy depths, dost thou pursue  
Thy solitary way ?

Vainly the fowler's eye  
Might mark thy distant flight to do thee wrong,  
As, darkly seen against the crimson sky,  
Thy figure floats along.

Seek'st thou the plashy brink  
Of weedy lake, or marge of river wide,  
Or where the rocking billows rise and sink  
On the chafed ocean-side ?

There is a Power whose care  
Teaches thy way along that pathless coast—  
The desert and illimitable air—  
Lone-wandering but not lost.

All day thy wings have fanned,  
At that far height, the cold thin atmosphere,  
Yet stoop not, weary, to the welcome land,  
Though the dark night is near.

And soon that toil shall end ;  
Soon shalt thou find a summer home, and rest  
And scream among thy fellows, reeds shall bend  
Soon o'er thy sheltered nest.

Thou'art gone—the abyss of heaven  
Hath swallowed up thy form ; yet on my heart  
Deeply hath sunk the lesson thou hast given,  
And shall not soon depart.

He who, from zone to zone,  
Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight,  
In the long way that I must tread alone,  
Will lead my steps aright.

JAMES THOMSON  
(1834-1882)

CXLVI

*THE CARRIER-DOVE \**

If you have a carrier-dove  
That can fly over land and sea ;  
And a message for your Love,  
“ Lady, I love but thee ! ”

And this dove will never stir,  
But straight from her to you,  
And straight from you to her ;  
As you know and she knows too.

Will you first ensure, O sage,  
Your dove that never tires  
With your message in a cage,  
Though a cage of golden wires ?

Or will you fling your dove :  
“ Fly, darling, without rest,  
Over land and sea to my Love,  
And fold your wings in her breast ? ”

WILLIAM JOHN COURTHOPE

(1842-1917)

CXLVII

*SEMI-CHORUS OF THRUSHES, LINNETS, AND  
BLACKCAPS*

O WINDLESS haven of delight !  
O equal bliss of day and night !  
O rest of birds ! what songs suffice  
To exalt thy glories, Paradise ?  
Here in clear streams all day we dip  
Our beaks, yet suffer from no pip.  
No longer over-cold or wet  
Do we feel heart-ache, care, or fret.  
Our throat and eye are ever clear ;  
Nor do we moult for all the year.

Here neither drought nor deluge breeds  
Harsh competition for the seeds ;  
Nor, as on earth in winters rough,  
Do insects fail : all find enough.  
Ripe berries here abound, to feast  
All souls, the greatest and the least :  
The ruddy fruit unguarded drops ;  
And here, for the grain-loving crops,  
Are seeds of every size and shape,  
The oily hemp and the sweet rape ;  
And, for the slender bills and small,  
Fresh flies and gnats ambrosial.  
Here in the moonlight prowls no stoat,  
The burglar of the sleeping cote.  
The very birds, which seemed on earth  
Bandits and cannibals by birth,  
Dwell here in brotherhood, alike  
The owl, the sparrow-hawk, the shrike.

The pies, once gluttons, no more strive  
Upon their neighbours' eggs to thrive ;  
And even the cuckoo has confessed,  
And, honest housewife, builds a nest.

Four months in roost and darkness run ;  
Four months we feel perpetual sun ;  
Ere he be risen, in dale and grove,  
We through the twilight sing of Love ;  
And while he slowly downward goes,  
We hymn the pleasures of Repose.  
So dwells each soul that sings or flies  
In our terrestrial Paradise.

## CXLVIII

*THE SONG OF MAN \**

MAN that is born of a woman,  
 Man, her un-web-footed drake,  
 Featherless, beakless, and human,  
 Is what he is by mistake.  
 For they say that a sleep fell on Nature,  
 In midst of the making of things ;  
 And she left him a two-leggèd creature,  
 But wanting in wings.

*Chorus*

Kluk-uk-uk ! kio ! coo !  
 Peewee ! caw, caw ! cuckoo !  
 Tio ! tuwheet ! tuwhoo ! pipitopan !  
 Chilly, unfeathered, wingless, short-tethered,  
 Restless, bird-nestless, unfortunate Man !

*Nightingale*

Gold he pursues like a shadow ;  
 Then, as he grasps at his goal,  
 Far, afar off, El-Dorado  
 Shines like a star on his soul.  
 So his high expectation brings sorrow,  
 And plenty increases his needs ;  
 But the birds took no thought for the morrow,  
 Secure of their seeds.

*Chorus*

Kluk-uk-uk ! etc.  
 Man the great sailor, petty retailer,  
 Wealthy, unhealthy, luxurious Man !

*Nightingale*

Therefore his heart, unforgiving,  
Grudged us the down on our coats,  
Envied the ease of our living,  
Hated the tune in our notes ;  
And he snared us, too careless and merry,  
Or compassed our death with his gun,  
As we wheeled round the currant and cherry,  
Or bathed in the sun.

*Chorus*

Kluk-uk-uk ! etc.  
Close-fisted warden, pest of the garden,  
Hooting, thrush-shooting, malevolent Man !

*Nightingale*

Though not a sigh float hither,  
Crossing the circle of snows,  
Deem not below us fair weather  
Gladdens mankind with repose.  
Still the wages of earth he is winning,  
Lamentation, and labour, and pain ;  
As it was in the very beginning,  
And so shall remain.<sup>(1)</sup>

*Chorus*

Kluk-uk-uk ! etc.  
Monarch of reason, slave of each season,  
Wizened, imprisoned, ex-Paradised Man !

## CXLIX

*BIRDS ARE SEEN APPROACHING IN THE  
AIR CARRYING NESTS FULL OF EGGS  
IN THEIR BEAKS \**

THE Birds in kind have each obeyed  
The Monarch, and their eggs have laid.  
Now they fly hither two and two,  
The nightingale, the plain cuckoo,  
The jay in crimson clad and blue,  
Robin in scarlet livery seen,  
And woodpecker in Lincoln green,  
And martin with white satin vest,  
And peewit proud of soldier crest,  
Blackcap with eye in merry mood  
Twinkling beneath his velvet hood,  
And jackdaw with his sable mate,  
But gray and reverent both in pate ;  
Besides all kinds of beak and wing,  
That walk, and hop, and fly, and sing.  
Within their beaks round nests they bear,  
One on each side, aloft in air,  
Compact of softest moss and wool,  
Well-wov'n and warm, of eggs brimful—  
Beautiful eggs, oval and bright  
In the green shell, or smooth and white,  
Like opals clear against the light,  
Or blue as skies that summer crown,  
Or toned to modest russet brown,  
Or else to olive verging more,  
And with dark mottling dappled o'er,

But delicately as might twin  
Soft freckles on a woman's skin ;  
In orderly procession straight,  
They seek our iceberg with their freight.

MATTHEW ARNOLD

(1822-1888)

CL

*PHILOMELA* \*

HARK! ah the Nightingale!

The tawny-throated!

Hark! from that moonlit cedar what a burst!

What triumph! hark—what pain!

O Wanderer from a Grecian shore,  
Still, after many years, in distant lands,  
Still nourishing in thy bewilder'd brain  
That wild, unquench'd, deep-sunken, old-world pain—

Say, will it never heal?

And can this fragrant lawn

With its cool trees, and night,

And the sweet tranquil Thames,

And moonshine, and the dew,

To thy rack'd heart and brain

Afford no balm?

Dost thou to-night behold

Here, through the moonlight on this English grass,  
The unfriendly palace in the Thracian wild?

Dost thou again peruse

With hot cheeks and sear'd eyes

The too clear web, and thy dumb Sister's shame?

Dost thou once more assay

Thy flight, and feel come over thee,

Poor Fugitive, the feathery change

Once more, and once more seem to make resound

With love and hate, triumph and agony,

Lone Daulis, and the high Cephissian vale?

Listen, Eugenia—

How thick the bursts come crowding through the leaves !  
Again—thou hearest !  
Eternal Passion !  
Eternal Pain !

## CLI

## "THE BLOOM IS GONE . . ." \*

So, some tempestuous morn in early June,  
 When the year's primal burst of bloom is o'er,  
 Before the roses and the longest day—  
 When garden-walks, and all the grassy floor,  
 With blossoms, red and white, of fallen May,  
 And chestnut-flowers are strewn—  
 So have I heard the cuckoo's parting cry,  
 From the wet field, through the vext garden-trees,  
 Come with the volleying rain and tossing breeze :  
*The bloom is gone, and with the bloom go I.*

Too quick despairer, wherefore wilt thou go ?  
 Soon will the high Midsummer pomps come on,  
 Soon will the musk carnations break and swell,  
 Soon shall we have gold-dusted snapdragon,  
 Sweet-William with its homely cottage smell,  
 And stocks in fragrant blow ;  
 Roses that down the alleys shine afar,  
 And open, jasmine-muffled lattices,  
 And groups under the dreaming garden-trees,  
 And the full moon, and the white evening star.

He hearkens not ! light comer, he is flown !  
 What matters it ? next year he will return,  
 And we shall have him in the sweet spring-days,  
 With whitening hedges, and uncrumpling fern,  
 And blue-bells trembling by the forest-ways,  
 And scent of hay new-mown. . . .

WILLIAM ALLINGHAM

(1824-1889)

CLII

*THE LOVER AND BIRDS \**

WITHIN a budding grove,  
In April's ear sang every bird his best,  
But not a song to pleasure my unrest  
Or touch the tears unwept of bitter love ;  
Some spake methought with pity, some as if in jest.  
    To every word  
    Of every bird  
I listened, or replied as it behove.

Screamed Chaffinch, " Sweet, sweet, sweet !  
Pretty lovey, come and meet me here ! "  
" Chaffinch," quoth I, " be dumb awhile, in fear  
Thy darling prove no better than a cheat,  
And never come, or fly when wintry days appear."  
    Yet from a twig,  
    With voice so big  
The little fowl his utterance did repeat.

Then I, " The man forlorn  
Hears Earth send up a foolish noise aloft."  
" And what'll *he* do ? What'll *he* do ? " scoffed  
The Blackbird, standing in an ancient thorn,  
Then spread his sooty wings and flitted to the croft,  
    With cackling laugh ;  
    Whom I, being half  
Enraged, called after, giving back his scorn.

Worse mocked the Thrush, " Die ! die !  
O, could he do it ? Could he do it ? Nay !

Be quick! be quick! Here, here, here!" (went his lay)  
 "Take heed! take heed!" then, "Why? why? why?  
 why? why?  
 See-ee now! see-ee now!" (he drawled)  
 "Back! back! back! R-r-r-run away!"  
 O thrush, be still!  
 Or at thy will  
 Seek some less sad interpreter than I.

"Air, air! blue air and white!  
 Whither I flee, whither, O whither, O whither I flee!"  
 (Thus the Lark hurried, mounting from the lea)  
 "Hills, countries, many waters glittering bright  
 Whither I see, whither I see! deeper, deeper, deeper,  
 whither I see, see, see!"  
 "Gay Lark," I said,  
 "The song that's bred  
 In happy nest may well to heaven take flight."

"There's something, something sad  
 I half remember"—pip'd a broken strain.  
 Well sung, sweet Robin! Robin sung again.  
 "Spring's opening, cheerily, cheerily! be we glad!"  
 Which moved, I wist not why, me melancholy mad,  
 Till now, grown meek,  
 With wetted cheek,  
 Most comforting and gentle thoughts I had.

CLIII

*A MEMORY \**

FOUR ducks on a pond,  
A grass-bank beyond,  
A blue sky of spring,  
White clouds on the wing :  
What a little thing  
To remember for years—  
To remember with tears.

CHARLES TENNYSON TURNER  
(1808-1879)

CLIV

*BIRD-NESTING \**

AH ! that half bashful and half eager face !  
Among the trees thy Guardian-Angel stands,  
With his heart beating, lest thy little hands  
Should come among the shadows and efface  
The stainless beauty of a life of love,  
And childhood innocence—for hark, the boys  
Are peering through the hedgerows and the grove,  
And ply their cruel sport with mirth and noise ;  
But thou hast conquer'd ! and dispell'd his fear ;  
Sweet is the hope thy youthful pity brings—  
And oft, methinks, if thou shalt shelter here,  
When these blue eggs are linnets' throats and wings,  
A secret spell shall bring about the tree  
The little birds that owed their lives to thee.

## CLV

*ON STARTLING SOME PIGEONS \**

A HUNDRED wings are dropt as soft as one,  
Now ye are lighted ! Pleasing to my sight  
The fearful circle of your wandering flight,  
Rapid and loud, and drawing homeward soon ;  
And then, the sober chiding of your tone,  
As there ye sit, from your own roofs arraigning  
My trespass on your haunts, so boldly done,  
Sounds like a solemn and a just complaining :  
O happy, happy race ! for though there clings  
A feeble fear about your timid clan,  
Yet are ye blest ! with not a thought that brings  
Disquietude,—while proud and sorrowing man,  
An eagle, weary of his mighty wings,  
With anxious inquest fill's his mortal span !

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI  
(1828-1882)

CLVI

*SUNSET WINGS* \*

I

TO-NIGHT this sunset spreads two golden wings  
    Cleaving the western sky ;  
Winged too with wind it is, and winnowings  
Of birds ; as if the day's last hour in rings  
    Of strenuous flight must die.

2

Sun-steeped in fire, the homeward pinions sway  
    Above the dovecote-tops ;  
And clouds of starlings, ere they rest with day,  
Sink, clamorous, like mill-waters, at wild play,  
    By turns in every copse :

3

Each tree heart-deep the wrangling rout receives,—  
    Save for the whirr within,  
You could not tell the starlings from the leaves ;  
Then one great puff of wings, and the swarm heaves  
    Away with all its din.

4

Even thus Hope's hours, in ever-eddying flight,  
    To many a refuge tend ;  
With the first light she laughed, and the last light  
Glow round her still ; who nathless in the night  
    At length must make an end.

## 5

And now the mustering rooks innumerable  
    Together sail and soar,  
While for the day's death, like a tolling knell,  
Unto the heart they seem to cry, Farewell,  
    No more, farewell, no more !

## 6

Is Hope not plumed, as 'twere a fiery dart ?  
    And oh ! thou dying day,  
Even as thou goest must she too depart,  
And Sorrow fold such pinions on the heart  
    As will not fly away ?

ALFRED LORD TENNYSON

(1809-1892)

CLVII

*THE EAGLE*

He clasps the crag with crooked hands ;  
Close to the sun in lonely lands,  
Ring'd with the azure world, he stands.

The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls ;  
He watches from his mountain walls,  
And like a thunderbolt he falls.

## CLVIII

*THE WHITE OWL \**

WHEN cats run home and light is come,  
    And dew is on the ground,  
And the far-off stream is dumb,  
    And the whirring sail goes round,  
    And the whirring sail goes round,  
Alone and warming his five wits  
The white owl in the belfry sits.

When merry milkmaids click the latch,  
    And rarely smells the new-mown hay,  
And the cock hath sung beneath the thatch  
    Twice or thrice his roundelay,  
    Twice or thrice his roundelay,  
Alone and warming his five wits  
The white owl in the belfry sits.

WALT WHITMAN

(1819-1892)

CLIX

*"OUT OF THE CRADLE ENDLESSLY  
ROCKING" \**

Out of the cradle endlessly rocking,  
Out of the mocking-bird's throat, the musical shuttle,  
Out of the Ninth-month midnight,  
Over the sterile sands and the fields beyond, where the  
    child, leaving his bed, wander'd alone, bareheaded,  
    barefoot,  
Down from the shower'd halo,  
Up from the mystic play of shadows, twining and twisting  
    as if they were alive,  
Out from the patches of briars and blackberries,  
From the memories of the bird that chanted to me,  
From your memories, sad brother, from the fitful risings  
    and fallings I heard,  
From under that yellow half-moon, late-risen and swollen  
    as if with tears,  
From those beginning notes of sickness and love there in  
    the transparent mist,  
From the thousand responses of my heart, never to cease,  
From the myriad thence-arousèd words,  
From the word stronger and more delicious than any,  
From such, as now they start the scene revisiting,  
As a flock, twittering, rising, or overhead passing,  
Borne hither, ere all eludes me, hurriedly,  
A man,—yet by these tears a little boy again,  
Throwing myself on the sand, confronting the waves,  
I, chanter of pains and joys, uniter of here and hereafter,  
Taking all hints to use them, but swiftly leaping beyond  
    them,  
A reminiscence sing.

Once Paumanok,  
When the snows had melted—when the lilac scent was in  
the air, and Fifth-month grass was growing,  
Up this sea-shore in some briers,  
Two guests from Alabama, two together,  
And their nest, and four light-green eggs spotted with  
brown,  
And every day the he-bird to and fro near at hand,  
And every day the she-bird, crouch'd on her nest, silent,  
with bright eyes,  
And every day I, a curious boy, never too close, never dis-  
turbing them,  
Cautiously peering, absorbing, translating.

*Shine ! shine ! shine !  
Pour down your warmth, great sun !  
While we bask, we two together.*

*Two together !  
Winds blow south, or winds blow north,  
Day come white, or night come black,  
Home, or rivers and mountains from home,  
Singing all time, minding no time,  
While we two keep together.*

Till of a sudden,  
May-be killed, unknown to her mate,  
One forenoon the she-bird crouch'd not on the nest,  
Nor return'd that afternoon, nor the next,  
Nor ever appear'd again.

And thenceforward, all summer, in the sound of the sea,  
And at night, under the full of the moon, in calmer weather,

Over the hoarse surging of the sea,  
 Or flitting from brier to brier by day,  
 I saw, I heard at intervals, the remaining one, the he-bird,  
 The solitary guest from Alabama.

*Blow! blow! blow!*  
*Blow up sea-winds along Paumanok's shore!*  
*I wait and I wait till you blow my mate to me.*

Yes, when the stars glisten'd,  
 All night long, on the prong of a moss-scallop'd stake,  
 Down almost amid the slapping waves,  
 Sat the lone singer, wonderful, causing tears.

He called on his mate.  
 He poured forth the meanings which I, of all men, know.

Yes, my brother, I know ;  
 The rest might not, but I have treasur'd every note ;  
 For once, and more than once, dimly, down to the beach  
     gliding,  
 Silent, avoiding the moonbeams, blending myself with the  
     shadows,  
 Recalling now the obscure shapes, the echoes, the sounds  
     and sights after their sorts,  
 The white arms out in the breakers tirelessly tossing,  
 I, with bare feet, a child, the wind wafting my hair,  
 Listen'd long and long.

Listen'd, to keep, to sing—now translating the notes,  
 Following you, my brother.

*Soothe! soothe! soothe!*

*Close on its wave soothes the wave behind,  
And again another behind, embracing and lapping, every one  
close,*

*But my love soothes not me, not me.*

*Low hangs the moon—it rose late ;  
O it is lagging—O I think it is heavy with love, with love.*

*O madly the sea pushes, pushes upon the land,  
With love—with love.*

*O night! do I not see my love fluttering out there among the  
breakers?*

*What is that little black thing I see there in the white?*

*Loud! loud! loud!*

*Loud I call to you, my love!*

*High and clear I shoot my voice over the waves ;*

*Surely you must know who is here, is here ;*

*You must know who I am, my love.*

*Low-hanging moon!*

*What is that dusky spot in your brown yellow?*

*O it is the shape, the shape of my mate!*

*O moon, do not keep her from me any longer.*

*Land! land! O land!*

*Whichever way I turn, O I think you could give me my mate  
back again, if you only would ;*

*For I am almost sure I see her dimly whichever way I look.*

*O rising stars!*

*Perhaps the one I want so much will rise, will rise with some  
of you.*

*O throat! O trembling throat!  
 Sound clearer through the atmosphere!  
 Pierce the woods, the earth;  
 Somewhere listening to catch you, must be the one I want.*

*Shake out, carols!  
 Solitary here, the night's carols!  
 Carols of lonesome love! Death's carols!  
 Carols under that lagging, yellow, waning moon!  
 O, under that moon, where she droops almost down into the  
     *sea!*  
 O reckless, despairing carols!*

*But soft! sink low;  
 Soft! let me just murmur;  
 And do you wait a moment, you husky-noised sea;  
 For somewhere I believe I heard my mate responding to me,  
 So faint I must be still, be still to listen;  
 But not altogether still, for then she might not come immedi-  
     *ately to me.**

*Hither, my love!  
 Here I am! here!  
 With this just-sustain'd note I announce myself to you;  
 This gentle call is for you, my love, for you.*

*Do not be decoy'd elsewhere:  
 That is the whistle of the wind, it is not my voice;  
 That is the fluttering, the fluttering of the spray;  
 Those are the shadows of leaves.*

*O darkness! O in vain!  
 O, I am very sick and sorrowful!*

*O brown halo in the sky near the moon, drooping upon the  
sea!*

*O troubled reflection in the sea!*

*O throat! O throbbing heart!*

*O all—and I singing uselessly, uselessly all the night!*

*Yet I murmur, murmur on.*

*O murmurs—you yourselves make me continue to sing, I know  
not why!*

*O past! O life! O songs of joy!*

*In the air, in the woods, over fields;*

*Loved! loved! loved! loved! loved!*

*But my love no more, no more with me!*

*We two together no more.*

The aria sinking;

All else continuing, the stars shining,

The winds blowing, the notes of the bird continuous echoing,

With angry moans the fierce old mother incessantly  
moaning,

On the sands of Paumanok's shore, gray and rustling:

The yellow half-moon enlarged, sagging down, drooping,  
the face of the sea almost touching;

The boy ecstatic, with his bare feet the waves, with his  
hair the atmosphere dallying,

The love in the heart long-pent, now loose, now at last  
tumultuously bursting,

The aria's meaning, the ears, the soul, swiftly depositing,

The strange tears down the cheeks coursing,

The colloquy there, the trio, each uttering,

The undertone, the savage old mother incessantly crying,

To the boy's soul's questions sullenly timing, some drown'd  
secret hissing,

To the outseting bard of love.

Demon or bird ! (said the boy's soul,)

Is it indeed toward your mate you sing ? or is it mostly  
to me ?

For I, that was a child, my tongue's use sleeping,

Now I have heard you,

Now in a moment I know what I am for, I awake,

And already a thousand singers, a thousand songs, clearer,  
louder and more sorrowful than yours,

A thousand warbling echoes have started to life within me,  
Never to die.

O you singer, solitary, singing by yourself, projecting me ;

O solitary me, listening, never more shall I cease per-  
petuating you ;

Never more shall I escape, never more the reverberations,  
Never more the cries of unsatisfied love be absent from me,  
Never again leave me to be the peaceful child I was before  
what there, in the night,

By the sea, under the yellow and sagging moon,

The messenger there arous'd, the fire, the sweet hell within,

The unknown want, the destiny of me !

O give me the clue ! (it lurks in the night here somewhere ;)

O if I am to have so much, let me have more !

O a word ! O what is my destination ? (I fear it is hence-  
forth chaos ;)

O how joys, dreads, convolutions, human shapes, and all  
shapes, spring as from graves around me !

O phantoms ! you cover all the land and all the sea !

O I cannot see in the dimness whether you smile or frown  
upon me ;

O vapour, a look, a word ! O well-beloved !  
O you dear women's and men's phantoms !

A word then, (for I will conquer it,)  
The word final, superior to all,  
Subtle, sent up—what is it ?—I listen ;  
Are you whispering it, and have been all the time, you sea-  
waves ?  
Is that it from your liquid rims and wet sands ?

Whereto answering, the sea,  
Delaying not, hurrying not,  
Whisper'd me through the night, and very plainly before  
daybreak,  
Lisp'd to me the low and delicious word DEATH ;  
And again Death,—ever Death, Death, Death,  
Hissing melodious, neither like the bird, nor like my aroused  
child's heart,  
But edging near, as privately for me, rustling at my feet,  
Creeping thence steadily up to my ears, and laving me  
softly all over,  
Death, Death, Death, Death, Death.

Which I do not forget,  
But fuse the song of my dusky demon and brother,  
That he sang to me in the moonlight on Paumanok's gray  
beach,  
With the thousand responsive songs, at random,  
My own songs, awaked from that hour ;  
And with them the key, the word up from the waves,  
The word of the sweetest song, and all songs,  
That strong and delicious word which, creeping to my feet,  
The sea whisper'd me.

## CLX

*TO THE MAN-OF-WAR BIRD \**

THOU who hast slept all night upon the storm,  
 Waking renew'd on thy prodigious pinions,  
 (Burst the wild storm? above it thou ascended'st,  
 And rested on the sky, thy slave that cradled thee,)  
 Now a blue point, far, far in heaven floating,  
 As to the light emerging here on deck I watch thee,  
 (Myself a speck, a point on the world's floating vast.)

Far, far at sea,  
 After the night's fierce drifts have strewn the shore with  
     wrecks,  
 With re-appearing day as now so happy and serene,  
 The rosy and elastic dawn, the flashing sun,  
 The limpid spread of air cerulean,  
 Thou also re-appearest.

Thou born to match the gale, (thou art all wings,)  
 To cope with heaven and earth and sea and hurricane,  
 Thou ship of air that never furl'st thy sails,  
 Days, even weeks untired and onward, through spaces,  
     realms gyrating,  
 At dusk thou look'st on Senegal, at morn America,  
 That sport'st amid the lightning flash and thunder-cloud,  
 In them in thy experiences, had'st thou my soul,  
 What joys! what joys were thine!

## CLXI

*THE DALLIANCE OF THE EAGLES \**

SKIRTING the river road, (my forenoon walk, my rest),  
Skyward in air a sudden muffled sound, the dalliance of the  
eagles,  
The rushing amorous contact high in space together,  
The clinching interlocking claws, a living, fierce, gyrating  
wheel,  
Four beating wings, two beaks, a swirling mass tight  
grappling,  
In tumbling turning clustering loops, straight downward  
falling,  
Till o'er the river poised, the twain yet one, a moment's  
lull,  
A motionless still balance in the air, then parting, talons  
loosing,  
Upward again on slow-firm pinions slanting, their separate  
diverse flight,  
She hers, he his, pursuing.

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

(1830-1894)

CLXII

*PAIN OR JOY \**

HARK! that's the nightingale,  
Telling the selfsame tale  
Her song told when this ancient earth was young :  
So echoes answered when her song was sung  
In the first wooded vale.

We call it love and pain  
The passion of her strain ;  
And yet we little understand or know ;  
Why should it not be rather joy that so  
Throbs in each throbbing vein ?

RICHARD GARNETT  
(1835-1906)

CLXIII

*THE VIOLET TO THE NIGHTINGALE \**

No longer fair, no longer sweet,  
I parch and pine with noonday heat ;  
Another day, perhaps an hour,  
And I shall be no more a flower.

Thou, happy bird, when flowers decay,  
But spread'st thy pinions, and away,  
And India's palmy groves, ere long,  
Are loud with thy immortal song.<sup>(1)</sup>

When with her soundless silver chain  
The moon has fettered mount and plain,  
And not a cloud her splendour mars,  
For she has kissed them all to stars :

When lissom (<sup>2</sup>) fawn and antelope  
In covert dell, on cedared slope  
Couch, or with bounding feet disturb  
The dew asleep on every herb :

When thousand lines of light invest  
The lotus trembling on the breast  
Of the great stream that seeks the sea,  
Then wilt thou sing. O sing of me !

So shall the gorgeous flowers that swoon  
All languid 'neath that lavish moon  
Know, in thy sweet enchanted strain,  
Their sister of the English lane.

How, lured by Spring's soft-falling feet,  
She stole forth from her deep retreat,  
Her nurse wild March of boisterous breath,  
April her spouse, and May her death.

All day she made her upward eye  
The mirror of the azure sky,  
All night she slept in glittering dew,  
And dreamed her morning longings true.

Come back in Spring, then wilt thou see  
Some other flower in room of me ;  
And as to me, to her wilt sing  
Of thy long Eastern wandering.

FRANCIS WILLIAM BOURDILLON  
(1852-1921)

CLXIV

*TO A LARK \**

O LITTLE singing bird,  
If I could word  
In as sweet human phrase  
Thy hymn of praise :

The world should hearken me  
As I do thee,  
And I should heed no more  
Than thou, but soar.

CLXV

*THE BLACKBIRD \**

O BLACKBIRD, who hath taught thee  
The heartbreak in thy song,  
In the shadowing after sunset  
When April days grow long ?

What though the lark in heaven  
Forget the Eden bar ?  
Thou art God's chosen singer  
To soothe his exile, Man.

WILLIAM BARNES  
(1801-1886)

CLXVI

*THE BLACKBIRD \**

Ov all the birds upon the wing  
Between the zunny show'rs o' spring,—  
Vor all the lark, a-swingèn high,  
Mid <sup>(1)</sup> zing sweet ditties to the sky,  
An' sparrows, clust'rèn roun' the bough,  
Mid clatter to the men at plough,—  
The blackbird, whisslèn in among  
The boughs, do zing the gayest zong.

Vor we do hear the blackbird zing  
His sweetest ditties in the spring,  
When nippèn win's noo mwore do blow  
Vrom northern skies, wi' sleet or snow,  
But drene light doust along between  
The leäne-zide hedges, thick an' green ;  
An' zoo the blackbird in among  
The boughs do zing the gayest zong.

'Tis blithe, wi' newly-wakèn eyes,  
To zee the mornèn's ruddy skies ;  
Or, out a-haulèn frith or lops <sup>(2)</sup>  
Vrom new-plesh'd <sup>(3)</sup> hedge or new-vell'd copse,  
To have woone's nammet <sup>(4)</sup> down below  
A tree where primrwozen do grow.  
But there's noo time, the whole dāy long,  
Lik' evenèn wi' the blackbird's zong.

JEAN INGELOW

(1830-1897)

CLXVII

*WRONG SERAPH AND RIGHT BIRD \**

FAR better in its place the lowliest bird  
Should sing aright to Him the lowliest song,  
Than that a seraph strayed should take the word  
And sing His glory wrong.

## CLXVIII

*SONG OF A NEST \**

A SONG of a nest :—

There was once a nest in a hollow :  
Down the mosses and knot-grass pressed,  
Soft and warm, and full to the brim—  
Vetches leaned over it purple and dim,  
With buttercup buds to follow.

I pray you hear my song of a nest,  
For it is not long :—  
You shall never light, in a summer quest  
The bushes among—  
Shall never light on a prouder sitter,  
A fairer nestful, nor ever know  
A softer sound than their tender twitter,  
That wind-like did come and go.

GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS

(1844-1889)

CLXIX

*THE WOODLARK* \*

*Teevo cheevo cheevio chee :*

O where, what can that be ?

*Weedio-weedio :* there again !

So tiny a trickle of s<sup>o</sup>ng-strain ;

And all round not to be found

For brier, bough, furrow, or gr<sup>ee</sup>n ground

Before or behind or far or at hand

Either left either right

Anywhere in the s<sup>u</sup>nlight.

Well, after all ! Ah but hark—

“ I am the little w<sup>o</sup>odlark.

. . . . .  
To-day the sky is two and two

With white strokes and strains of the blue

. . . . .  
Round a ring, around a ring

And while I sail (must listen) I sing

. . . . .  
The skylark is my cousin and he

Is known to men more than me

. . . . .  
. . . when the cry within

Says Go on then I go on

Till the longing is less and the good gone

. . . . .  
But down drop, if it says Stop,

To the all-a-leaf of the tr<sup>ee</sup>top

And after that off the bough

. . . . .

I am so véry, O só very glad  
 That I dó thínk there is not to be had . . .

. . . . .  
 The blue wheat-acre is underneath  
 And the braided ear breaks out of the sheath,  
 The ear in milk, lush the sash,  
 And crush-silk poppies aflash,  
 The blood-gush blade-gash  
 Flame-rash rudred  
 Bud shelling or broad-shed  
 Tatter-tassel-tangled and dingle-a-dangled  
 Dandy-hung dainty head.

. . . . .  
 And down . . . the furrow dry  
 Sunspurge and oxeye  
 And laced-leaved lovely  
 Foam-tuft fumitory

. . . . .  
 Through the velvety wind V-winged  
 To the nest's nook I balance and buoy  
 With a sweet joy of a sweet joy,  
 Sweet, of a sweet, of a sweet joy  
 Of a sweet -a sweet -sweet -joy."

JOHN BANISTER TABB  
(1845-1909)

CLXX

*THE LONELY MOUNTAIN*

I

ONE bird, that ever with the wakening Spring  
Was wont to sing,  
I wait, through all my woodlands, far and near,  
In vain to hear.

2

A thousand other wingèd warblers sweet  
Returning, greet  
Their fellows, and rebuild upon my breast  
The wonted nest.

3

The voice of many waters, silent long,  
Breaks forth in song ;  
Young breezes to the listening leaves outpour  
Their heavenly lore :

4

But unto me one fond familiar strain  
Comes not again—  
A breath whose faintest echo, farthest heard,  
A mountain stirred.

CLXXI

*THE LARK*

HE rose, and singing passed from sight—  
A shadow kindling with the sun,  
His joy ecstatic flamed, till light  
And heavenly song were one.

CLXXII

*BARTIMEUS TO THE BIRD*

HAD I no revelation but thy voice—  
    No word but thine—  
Still would my soul in certitude rejoice  
    That love divine  
Thy heart, his hidden instrument, employs  
    To waken mine.

CLXXIII

*EVOLUTION* \*

Out of the dusk a shadow,  
Then, a spark ;  
Out of the cloud a silence,  
Then, a lark ;  
Out of the heart a rapture,  
Then, a pain ;  
Out of the dead cold ashes,  
Life again.

CLXXIV

*HOLY GROUND*

PAUSE where apart the fallen sparrow lies,  
And lightly tread ;  
For there the pity of a Father's eyes  
Enshrines the dead.

CLXXV

*A REMONSTRANCE \**

SING me no more, sweet warbler, for the dart  
Of joy is keener than the flash of pain :  
Sing me no more, for the re-echoed strain  
Together with the silence breaks my heart.

FRANCIS THOMPSON  
(1859-1907)

CLXXVI

*THE QUESTION* \*

I

O BIRD with heart of wassail,  
That toss the Bacchic branch,  
And slip your shaken music,  
An elfin avalanche ;

2

Come tell me, O tell me,  
My poet of the blue !  
What's your thought of me, Sweet ?—  
Here's my thought of you.

3

A small thing, a wee thing,  
A brown fleck of nought ;  
With winging and singing  
That who could have thought ?

4

A small thing, a wee thing,  
A brown amaze withal,  
That fly a pitch more azure  
Because you're so small.

5

Bird, I'm a small thing—  
My angel descries ;  
With winging and singing  
That who could surmize ?

## 6

Ah, small things, ah, wee things,  
Are the poets all,  
Whose tour's the more azure  
Because they're so small.

## 7

The angels hang watching  
The tiny men-things :—  
The dear speck of flesh, see,  
With such daring wings !

## 8

Come tell us, O tell us,  
Thou strange mortality !  
What's *thy* thought of us, Dear ?—  
Here's *our* thought of thee.

## 9

Alack, you tall angels,  
I cant think so high !  
I cant think what it feels like  
Not to be I.

## 10

Come tell me, O tell me,  
My poet of the blue ?  
What's *your* thought of me, Sweet ?—  
Here's *my* thought of you.

JAMES ELROY FLECKER

(1884-1915)

CLXXVII

*TENEBRIS INTERLUCENTEM \**

A LINNET who had lost her way  
Sang on a blackened bough in Hell,  
Till all the ghosts remembered well  
The trees, the wind, the golden day.

At last they knew that they had died  
When they heard music in that land,  
And some one there stole forth a hand  
To draw a brother to his side.

LIVING WRITERS



*THE BLINDED BIRD \**

I

So zestfully canst thou sing ?  
And all this indignity,  
With God's consent, on thee !  
Blinded ere yet a-wing  
By the red-hot needle thou,  
I stand and wonder how  
So zestfully thou canst sing !

2

Resenting not such wrong,  
Thy grievous pain forgot,  
Eternal dark thy lot,  
Groping thy whole life long,  
After that stab of fire ;  
Enjailed in pitiless wire ;  
Resenting not such wrong !

3

Who hath charity ? This bird.  
Who suffereth long and is kind,  
Is not provoked, though blind  
And alive ensepulchred ?  
Who hopeth, endureth all things ?  
Who thinketh no evil, but sings ?  
Who is divine ? This bird.

CLXXIX

*THE DARKLING THRUSH*

I LEANT upon a coppice gate  
When Frost was spectre-gray,  
And Winter's dregs made desolate  
The weakening eye of day.  
The tangled bine-stems scored the sky,  
Like strings from broken lyres,  
And all mankind that haunted nigh  
Had sought their household fires.

The land's sharp features seem'd to be  
The Century's corpse outleant,  
His crypt the cloudy canopy,  
The wind his death-lament.  
The ancient pulse of germ and birth  
Was shrunken hard and dry,  
And every spirit upon earth  
Seem'd fervourless as I.

At once a voice burst forth among  
The bleak twigs overhead  
In a full-hearted evensong  
Of joy illimited ;  
An aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small,  
In blast-beruffled plume,  
Had chosen thus to fling his soul  
Upon the growing gloom.

So little cause for carollings  
Of such ecstatic sound  
Was written on terrestrial things  
Afar or nigh around,  
That I could think there trembled through  
His happy good-night air  
Some blessèd Hope, whereof he knew  
And I was unaware.

CLXXX

*THE ROBIN* \*

WHEN up aloft  
I fly and fly,  
I see in pools  
The shining sky,  
And a happy bird  
Am I, am I!

When I descend  
Towards their brink  
I stand, and look,  
And stoop, and drink,  
And bathe my wings,  
And chink and prink.

When winter frost  
Makes earth as steel,  
I search and search  
But find no meal,  
And most unhappy  
Then I feel.

But when it lasts,  
And snows still fall,  
I get to feel  
No grief at all,  
For I turn to a cold stiff  
Feathery ball!

JAMES STEPHENS

CLXXXI

*THE SONG \**

I HAVE a black, black mind !  
What shall I do ?  
If I could fly and leave it all behind,  
Scaling the blue,  
Over the trees and up and out of sight,  
And wrong and right  
Naming them both the nonsense that they are !  
I'd leave them far,  
Drop them behind with these and these and these,  
The tyrannies  
That promised to be blessings and are woes,  
The chattering crows  
That I had fancied to be singing birds,  
The angry words  
That drowse and buzz and drone and never stay.  
Oh ! far away !  
Over the pine trees and the mountain top,  
Never to stop ;  
Lifting wide wings to fly and fly and fly  
Into the sky.

If I had wings just like a bird  
I would not say a single word,  
I'd spread my wings and fly away  
Beyond the reach of yesterday.

Damn yesterday ! and this and that,  
And these and those, and all the flat  
Dull catalogue of weighty things  
That somehow fastened to my wings.

Over the pine trees and the mountain top  
 I will not stop,  
 I lift my wings and fly and fly and fly  
 Into the sky.

No more of woeful misery I sing !  
 Let her go moping down the paved way ;  
 While to the sunny fields and everything  
 That laughs, and to the little birds that sing,  
 I pass along and tune my happy lay :  
 O sunny sky !  
 O meadows that the happy clouds are drifting by !

I walk and play beside the little stream  
 As by a friend : I dance in solitude  
 Among the trees, or lie and gaze and dream  
 Along the grass, or hearken to the theme  
 A lark discourses to her tender brood :  
 O sunny sky !  
 O meadows that the happy clouds are drifting by !

There is a thrush lives snugly in a wall,  
 She lets me come and peep into her nest,  
 She lets me see and touch the speckled ball  
 Under her wing, and does not fear at all,  
 Although her shy companion is distressed :  
 O sunny sky !  
 O meadows that the happy clouds are drifting by !

Sing, sing again ye little birds of joy !  
 Call out from tree to tree and tell your tale  
 Of happiness that knoweth no alloy ;  
 Although your mates seem timorous and coy  
 If ye sing high enough how can ye fail ?  
 O sunny sky,  
 O meadows that the happy clouds go drifting by !

I am the brother of each bird and tree  
And everything that grows—your children glad ;  
Their hearts are in my heart, their ecstasy !  
O Mother of all mothers, comfort me,  
Give me your breast for I am very sad :  
O sunny sky,  
O meadows that the happy clouds are drifting by.

I wandered far away in early morn,  
When summer did the happy trees adorn ;  
Leaving behind all woe and discontent,  
All sorrow and distress and angry pain,  
And did not say to any where I went,  
Or when or if I should return again  
From leafy solitude.

I wandered far away and far away,  
And was as happy as a person may,  
Until I heard the birds all singing plain  
Upon their several trees, a joyous band,  
Who had no care save only to attain  
The food and shelter that lay every hand  
In leafy solitude.

I wandered far away and did not turn :  
At their glad songs my heart began to burn,  
And joy that I had never known before,  
And tears that had no meaning I could say,  
Came from the hymns the little birds did pour  
To me as I went softly on my way  
In leafy solitude.

I wandered far away and I was glad ;  
I knew the rapture that the forest had ;

And every bird was good to me and said  
A kindly word before I passed him by,  
The cheery squirrel sat and ate his bread  
And did not fear me when I ventured nigh  
His leafy solitude.

I wandered far away—O, all alas !  
How quickly does the little freedom pass !  
Can I return again to domicile ?  
Or leave the birds each on his several tree ?  
Or recollect the songs they sang to me  
In leafy solitude ?

O birds, my brothers, sing to me once more !  
E'er I return again to whence I came,  
Give me your happiness, your joy, your lore,  
Your woodland innocence I claim  
Because ye truly are my brothers dear,  
Sing to me once again before I go from here.

In woodland paths again we may not meet ;  
Under the slender interlacing boughs,  
Where all day long the sunbeams flash and fleet  
On leaf and grass and wing,  
And all day long ye sing  
And hold carouse :  
Because ye truly are my brothers dear,  
Sing to me once again before I go from here.

I from your happy company must go away  
To whence I came ;  
But ye through all the quiet summer day  
Will sing the same,

And fly and hold carouse  
Under the slender interlacing boughs :  
When I am gone, who am your brother dear,  
Sing to me once again before I go from here.

All things must cease at last ;  
Night cometh after day  
And day is past :  
All things must end  
And friend from loving friend  
At the long last must rise and go away ;  
And from the slender interlacing boughs  
The leaves that flutter now will fail and fall ;  
The time is come I may no more carouse,  
Farewell to ye, farewell unto ye all,  
Ye birds who truly are my brothers dear :  
Sing to me once again before I go from here.

O clouds that sail afar almost unseen !  
O unattainable ! to you alone  
I lift my wings,  
To you I lean,  
I yearn to you beyond all other things ;  
Desperate I am for you, for you I moan ;  
I struggle up to you and always fail,  
I sink and fall, I fall for ever down,  
Deep down where you are not, without avail  
Or help or hope : a clod, a grinning clown  
Whose wry mouth laughs in fury at his thought ;  
A discontent without a word to say ;  
A hope that cannot fasten upon aught ;  
A nothing that is anything it may ;

A moodiness, a hatred and a love  
Mixed, mixed of good and bad that can not show ;  
But you are calm at morning as a dove  
Is calm upon her nest, and in the glow  
Of mid-day you are bathèd round with joy,  
And as a woman looking on the child  
Within her arms asleep has no annoy,  
So, with contented brows and bosom mild,  
You rest upon the evening and its gold,  
Its tender rose and pearl and green and gray :  
O peacefulness that never has been told !  
O far away !  
Over the pine trees and the mountain top,  
Never to stop,  
Lifting wide wings, to fly and fly and fly  
Into the sky.

Weary indeed I know the whole world is ;  
Then do not sing to me a song of woe,  
But tune your pipe to every merry bliss  
Ye can remember, and I will not miss  
To join in every chorus that I know :  
Give me the very rapture of your song,  
Else I may go away with thoughts that do ye wrong.

The joyful song that welcomes in the spring,  
The tender mating song so bravely shy,  
The song that builds the nest, the merry ring  
When the long wait is ended and ye bring  
The young birds out and teach them how to fly :  
Sing to me of the bechnuts on the ground,  
And of the first wild flight at early dawn,  
And of the store of berries someone found

And hid away until ye gathered round  
And ate them while he shrieked upon the lawn :  
Sing of the swinging nest upon the tree,  
And of your mates who call and hide away,  
And of the leaves that dance, and all the glee  
And rapture that begins at break of day.

O birds, O birds, sing once again to me !  
Sing me the joy ye have not reached to yet ;  
E'er I go hence give me your ecstasy,  
E'er I go hence, e'er far away I flee  
Give me the joy which I may not forget ;  
The very inner rapture of your song :  
Else I may go away with thoughts that do ye wrong.

O follow, follow, follow !  
Blackbird, thrush and swallow ;  
The air is soft, the sun is shining through  
The dancing boughs ;  
A little while me company along  
And I will go with you :  
Arouse, arouse !  
Among the leaves I sing my pleasant song.

Blackbird, thrush and swallow !  
Indeed the visits that I pay are very few,  
Then come to me as I have come to you :  
O follow, follow, follow !  
Leave for a little time your nested boughs  
And me accompany along,  
Join me while I am happy ; rouse, O rouse !  
Among the leaves I sing my pleasant song.

Sky, sky,  
 On high,  
 O gentle majesty !  
 Come all ye happy birds and follow, follow  
 Under the slender interlacing boughs,  
 Blackbird, thrush and swallow !  
 No longer in the sunlight sit and drowse  
 But me accompany along ;  
 No longer be ye mute ; arouse, arouse !  
 Among the leaves I sing my pleasant song.

Lift, lift, ye happy birds,  
 Lift song and wing,  
 And sing and fly,  
 And fly again and sing  
 Up to the very blueness of the sky  
 Your happy words.  
 O follow, follow, follow,  
 Where I go racing through the shady ways,  
 Blackbird, thrush and swallow,  
 Shouting aloud our ecstasy of praise :  
 Under the slender interlacing boughs  
 Me company along,  
 The sun is coming with us : rouse, O rouse !  
 Among the leaves I sing my pleasant song.

Reach up my wings !  
 Now broaden into space and carry me  
 Beyond where any lark that sings  
 Can get :  
 Into the utmost sharp tenuity,  
 The breathing-point, the start, the scarcely-stirred  
 High slenderness where never any bird  
 Has winged to yet !

The moon peace and the star peace and the peace  
Of chilly sunlight ; to the void of space,  
The emptiness, the giant curve, the great  
Wide-stretching arms wherein the gods embrace  
And stars are born and suns : where germinate  
All fruitful seed, where life and death are one,  
Where all things that are not their times await ;  
Where all things that have been again are gone :  
Deep womb of promise ! back to thee again  
And forth revived, all living things  
Do come and go,  
For ever wax and wane into and from thy garden ;  
There the flower springs,  
Therein does grow  
The bud of hope, the miracle to come  
For whose dear advent we are striving dumb  
And joyless : Garden of Delight  
That God has sowed !  
In thee the flower of flowers,  
The apple of our tree,  
The banner of our towers,  
The recompense for every misery,  
The angel man, the purity, the light  
Whom we are working to has his abode ;  
Until our back and forth, our life and death  
And life again, our going and return  
Prepare the way : until our latest breath,  
Deep-drawn and agonized, for him shall burn  
A path : for him prepare  
Laughter and love and singing everywhere ;  
A morning and a sunrise and a day !  
O, far away !  
Over the pine trees and the mountain top

Never to stop,  
Lifting wide wings, to fly and fly and fly  
Into the sky.

Song ! I am tired to death ! here let me lie  
Where we have paced the moving trees along,  
Till I recover from my ecstasy :  
Farewell my Song.

Once more unto your pipe I lend my rhyme  
Who in the woods did pace with you along ;  
We have been happy for a little time :  
Farewell my Song.

Soon, soon return or else my world is naught ;  
Come back and we will pace the woods along,  
And tell unto each other all our thought :  
Farewell my Song.

And when again you do come back to me  
Under the sounding trees we'll pace along,  
While to your pipe I raise my poetry :  
Farewell my Song.

CLXXXII

*THE FIFTEEN ACRES \**

I CLING and swing  
On a branch, or sing  
Through the cool, clear hush of morning, O :  
Or fling my wing  
In the air, and bring  
To sleepier birds a warning, O :  
That the night's in flight,  
And the sun's in sight,  
And the dew is the grass adorning, O :  
And the green leaves swing  
As I sing, sing, sing,  
Up by the river,  
Down the dell,  
To the little wee nest,  
Where the big tree fell,  
So early in the morning, O.

I flit and twit  
In the sun for a bit  
When his light so bright is shining, O :  
Or sit and fit  
My plumes, or knit  
Straw plaits for the nest's nice lining, O :  
And she with glee  
Shows unto me  
Underneath her wings reclining, O :  
And I sing that Peg  
Has an egg, egg, egg,  
Up by the oat-field,

## JAMES STEPHENS

Round the mill,  
Past the meadow,  
Down the hill,  
So early in the morning, O.

I stoop and swoop  
On the air, or loop  
Through the trees, and then go soaring, O :  
To group with a troop  
On the gusty poop  
While the wind behind is roaring, O :  
I skim and swim  
By a cloud's red rim  
And up to the azure flooring, O :  
And my wide wings drip  
As I slip, slip, slip  
Down through the rain-drops,  
Back where Peg  
Broods in the nest  
On the little white egg,  
So early in the morning, O.

*THE MISSEL THRUSH \**

I SAW the sun burn in the blue,  
And a missel thrush flew by,  
And the missel thrush to a chestnut flew.

I saw a white cloud in the sky,  
And linnets sang—their breasts were red ;  
And linnets sang melodiously.

And up the sky the white cloud sped,  
The wind woke crying in the trees,  
And the white cloud batted, his bulk was fed

By a thousand clouds that swarmed like bees ;  
I heard the rough wind whistle shrill,  
And the clouds banked up in billowy seas.

O wild the day that was so still !  
The elm flung tribute of her green,  
And linnets tossed from hedge to hill.

The sun was gone and the wind blew keen,  
The clouds grew gray and grayer grew,  
The sun was gone behind the screen.

The wind blew wild and wilder blew,  
And shriller screamed and louder bawled,  
And spun with fury round the yew.

Like a bruised snake the yew branch crawled  
And cricked and hissed like a bruised snake  
Where the sheltering blackbird shrank appalled,

And waking slept and slept awake  
And huddled stupid from the day,  
Nor heard the clatt'ring thunder shake

The cloud that hung so low and gray ;  
I heard the thunder shake the cloud,  
And the rough wind come and die away.

I heard the gray thrush piping loud  
From the wheezing chestnut-tree ;  
The gray thrush gripped the spray that bowed

Beneath the storm, and brave sang he—  
O, he sang brave as he were one  
Who hailed a people newly free !

But all was fear and hope was none,  
For Heav'n bled flame as Heav'n were Hell ;  
Still the thrush sang blithely on.

The rough wind sank and the rough wind fell—  
O, the rough wind died upon the hill,  
And thunder was its passing-bell.

The gray cloud burst, I saw it spill  
Black floods as skiey seas fell whole.  
The thrush sang with amazing skill.<sup>(1)</sup>

The gray thrush heard the thunders roll,  
And sang and heard not what he sang.  
The Storm King claimed a noble toll,

I saw his golden fang,  
I saw it close upon the wood  
That loud with thrush notes rang.

I looked again : the tempest's hood  
Was torn across ; I saw the sky ;  
So green and new the chestnut stood,

The elm lay split hard by—  
From bough to bole the elm was split,  
And above was melody.

I saw the sky—the sky was lit,  
The sky was lit with sun.  
I saw a gray thrush by me flit ;  
He sang no song—his song was done ;  
I saw his studded breast ;  
And plovers rose, ten score as one,  
And ribboned in the East.

CLXXXIV

*STUPIDITY STREET* \*

I SAW with open eyes  
Singing birds sweet  
Sold in the shops  
For the people to eat,  
Sold in the shops of  
Stupidity Street.

I saw in vision  
The worm in the wheat,  
And in the shops nothing  
For people to eat ;  
Nothing for sale in  
Stupidity Street.

CLXXXV

*HYMN TO MOLOCH \**

O THOU who didst furnish  
 The fowls of the air  
 With lovely feathers  
 For leydies to wear,  
 Receive this Petition  
 For blessin an aid,  
 From the principal Ouses  
 Engaged in the Trade.

The trouble's as follows ;  
 A white livered Scum,  
 What if they was choked  
 'Twould be better for some,  
 'S been pokin about an  
 Creatin a fuss  
 An talkin too loud to be  
 Ealthy for us.

Thou'lt ardly believe  
 Ow damn friendly they are,  
 They say there's a time  
 In the future not far  
 When birds worth good money 'll  
 Waste by the ton  
 And the Trade can look perishin  
 Pleased to look on :

With best lines in Paradies  
 Equal to what  
 Is fetchin a pony  
 A time in the at.

## RALPH HODGSON

An ospreys an ummins  
 An other choice goods  
 Wastefully oppin  
 About in the woods.

They 're kiddin the papers  
 An callin us names,  
 Not Yorkshire ones neither,  
 That's one of their games ;  
 They've others as pleasin  
 An soakin with spite,  
 An it dont make us appy,  
 Ow can it do, quite !

We thank thee most earty  
 For mercies to date,  
 The Olesales is pickin  
 Nice profits per crate,  
 Reports from the Retails  
 Is pleasin to read,  
 We certainly thank thee  
 Most earty indeed.

Vouchsafe, then, to muzzle  
 These meddlesome swine,  
 An learn em to andle goods  
 More in their line,  
 Be faithful, be foxy  
 Till peril is past,  
 An plant thy strong sword  
 In their livers at last.

CLXXXVI

## SONG \*

THERE, sharp and sudden, there I heard—  
*Ah, some wild lovesick singing bird*  
*Woke singing in the trees?*  
*The nightingale and babble-wren*  
*Were in the English greenwood then,*  
*And you heard one of these?*

The babble-wren and nightingale  
Sang in the Abyssinian vale  
That season of the year!  
Yet, true enough, I heard them plain,  
I heard them both, again, again,  
As sharp and sweet and clear  
As if the Abyssinian tree  
Had thrust a bough across the sea,  
Had thrust a bough across to me  
With music for my ear!

I heard them both, and oh! I heard  
The song of every singing bird  
That sings beneath the sky,  
And with the song of lark and wren  
The song of mountains, moths and men  
And seas and rainbows vie!

I heard the universal choir  
The Sons of Light exalt their Sire

With universal song,  
Earth's lowliest and loudest notes,  
Her million times ten million throats  
Exalt Him loud and long,  
And lips and lungs and tongues of Grace  
From every part and every place  
Within the shining of His face,  
The universal throng.

CLXXXVII

*TO A LINNET IN A CAGE \**

WHEN Spring is in the fields that stained your wing,  
And the blue distance is alive with song,  
And finny quiets of the gabbling spring  
Rock lilies red and long,  
At dewy daybreak, I will set you free  
In ferny turnings of the woodbine lane,  
Where faint-voiced echoes leave and cross in glee  
The hilly swollen plain.

In draughty houses you forget your tune,  
The modulator of the changing hours,  
You want the wide air of the moody noon,  
And the slanting evening showers.  
So I will loose you, and your song shall fall  
When morn is white upon the dewy pane,  
Across my eyelids, and my soul recall  
From worlds of sleeping pain.

CLXXXVIII

*TO A SPARROW \**

BECAUSE you have no fear to mingle  
Wings with those of greater part,  
So like me, with song I single  
Your sweet impudence of heart.

And when prouder feathers go where  
Summer holds her leafy show,  
You still come to us from nowhere  
Like grey leaves across the snow.

In back ways where odd and end go  
To your meals you drop down sure,  
Knowing every broken window  
Of the hospitable poor.

There is no bird half so harmless,  
None so sweetly rude as you,  
None so common and so charmless,  
None of virtues nude as you.

But for all your faults I love you,  
For you linger with us still,  
Though the wintry winds reprove you  
And the snow is on the hill.

*MAGPIES IN PICARDY* \*

THE magpies in Picardy  
Are more than I can tell.  
They flicker down the dusty roads  
And cast a magpie spell  
On the men who march through Picardy,  
Through Picardy to Hell.  
(The blackbird flies with panic,  
The swallows go like light,  
The finches move like ladies,  
The owl floats by at night ;  
But the great and flashing magpie  
He flies as artists might.)

A magpie in Picardy  
Told me secret things—  
Of the music in white feathers  
And the sunlight that sings  
And dances in deep shadows—  
He told me with his wings.  
(The hawk is cruel and rigid,  
He watches from a height ;  
The rook is slow and sombre,  
The robin loves to fight ;  
But the great and flashing magpie  
He flies as lovers might.)

He told me that in Picardy,  
An age ago or more,  
While all his feathers still were eggs,  
Those dusty highways bore

Brown singing soldiers marching out  
Through Picardy to war.  
He said that still through chaos  
Works on the ancient plan,  
And two things have altered not  
Since first the world began—  
The beauty of the wild green earth  
And the bravery of man.  
(For the sparrow flies unthinking  
And quarrels in his flight ;  
The heron trails his legs behind,  
The lark goes out of sight ;  
But the great and flashing magpie  
He flies as poets might.)

CXC

## AUGURY \*

WHAT sweeter sight can ever charm the eye  
 Than robin come to claim his largess old,  
 And, pinnacled against the eager sky,  
 Daring the armies of the brazen cold ?  
 And wren a-running (while the storm shrouds all  
 The swinging mill-sails and black ghosts of groves)  
 Among the weeds that shake beneath the wall,  
 Well may she vie with him in all our loves !

The mystery of the dark birthday of spring  
 Ever to childhood flowered into a sign  
 As over head I saw the paired swans wing,  
 In whose wild breasts the gods made the light shine !  
 And flight and song have measured year on year,  
 Recorders of my solitude, till the sun  
 Is the bright hymn of nations of the air  
 And evening and the dream-like owl are one.

So copses green start out of time stol'n hence  
 Because they rung with nightingales above  
 Their fellows, so returns dear innocence  
 At recollection of the lulling dove ;  
 For alms the redbreast comes, the wren dares run,  
 While rook and magpie saunter through the sky,  
 All with their kinship of the morning sun—  
 In what rare element they sing and fly !

But O how bitter burns these fair ones' pain,  
 When satyr hands in cages shut their young,  
 The old birds coming with their food in vain,  
 Till death's a mercy ; O how vast the wrong

That shuts them in, that starves but one small owl  
Snatched into glaring day and mocks his hate ;  
And who, the wonder is, but djinn or ghoul  
Durst steal one mothering wing for folly's bait ?

*DAY'S BLACK STAR \**

Is it that small black star,  
    Twinkling in broad daylight,  
Upon the bosom of  
    Yon cloud so white—  
Is it that small black thing  
Makes earth and all Heaven ring ?

Sing, you black star ; and soar  
    Until, alas ! too soon  
You fall to earth in one  
    Long swinging swoon ;  
But you will rise again  
    To Heaven, from this green plain.

Sing, sing, sweet star ; though black,  
    Your company's more bright  
Than any star that shines  
    With a white light ;  
Sing, Skylark, sing ; and give  
    To me thy joy to live.

SONG-BIRDS FOR SALE \*

SWEET-THROATED linnets, small and brown,  
The joyful shopkeeper now brags  
That you to-day fetch half-a-crown,  
Where once, done up in paper bags,  
Your cost was but one fourth as great—  
You fetched not thirty pence, but eight.

Lovers of caged things feel sore  
At this unparalleled expense.  
*Why* must our linnets cost us more ?  
What's your defence ? What's your defence,  
You natives of the cageless earth ?  
We all know what a linnets' worth.

In sheer revenge, had I *my* way,  
I'd set your purchase past all price,  
So that the buyer of birds to-day  
Would not think once or even twice,  
But cry on hearing it : " Absurd !  
A thousand guineas for a bird ? "

Then in the sort of righteous rage  
Men feel when they are being done,  
They'd break that worthless linnets' cage,  
And fling the linnets to the sun,  
Bidding all shop-keepers who sell  
Songbirds for silver go to hell.

*IN EARLY SPRING \**

O SPRING, I know thee ! Seek for sweet surprise  
 In the young children's eyes.  
 But I have learnt the years, and know the yet  
 Leaf-folded violet.

Mine ear, awake to silence, can foretell  
 The cuckoo's fitful bell.

I wander in a grey time that encloses  
 June and the wild hedge-roses.  
 A year's procession of the flowers doth pass  
 My feet, along the grass.

And all you wild birds silent yet, I know  
 The notes that stir you so,  
 Your songs yet half devized in the dim dear  
 Beginnings of the year.

In these young days you meditate your part ;  
 I have it all by heart

I know the secrets of the seeds of flowers  
 Hidden and warm with showers,  
 And how, in kindling Spring, the cuckoo shall  
 Alter his interval.

But not a flower or song I ponder is  
 My own, but memory's.

I shall be silent in those days desired  
 Before a world inspired.

O all brown birds, compose your old song-phrases,  
 Earth, thy familiar daisies !

A poet mused upon the dusky height,  
 Between two stars towards night,

His purpose in his heart. I watched, a space,  
The meaning of his face :  
There was the secret, fled from earth and skies,  
Hid in his young grey eyes.  
My heart and all the Summer wait his choice,  
And wonder for his voice.  
Who shall foretell his songs, and who aspire  
But to divine his lyre ?  
Sweet earth, we know thy dimmest mysteries,  
But he is lord of his.

MARTIN ARMSTRONG

CXCIV

*THE BUZZARDS \**

WHEN evening came and the warm glow grew deeper  
And every tree that bordered the green meadows,  
And in the yellow cornfields every reaper  
And every corn-shock stood above their shadows  
Flung eastward from their feet in longer measure,  
Serenely far there swam in the sunny height  
A buzzard and his mate who took their pleasure  
Swirling and poising idly in golden light ;  
On great pied motionless moth-wings borne along,  
    So effortless and so strong,  
Cutting each other's paths, together they glided,  
Then wheeled asunder till they soared divided  
Two valleys width (as though it were delight  
To part like this, being sure they could unite  
So swiftly in their empty, free dominion),  
Curved headlong downward, towered up the sunny steep,  
Then with a sudden lift of the one great pinion,  
Swung proudly to a curve and from its height  
Took half a mile of sunlight in one long sweep.

And we, so small on the swift immense hillside,  
Stood tranced, until our souls arose uplifted  
    On those far-sweeping, wide,  
Strong curves of flight,—swayed up and hugely drifted,  
Were washed, made strong and beautiful in the tide  
Of sun-bathed air. But far beneath, beholden  
Through shining deeps of air, the fields were golden  
And rosy burned the heather where cornfields ended.  
And still those buzzards wheeled, while light withdrew  
Out of the vales and to surging slopes ascended,  
Till the loftiest-flaming summit died to blue.

*THE RETURN OF THE GOLDFINCHES \**

WE are much honoured by your choice,  
O golden birds of silver voice,  
That in our garden you should find  
A pleasaunce to your mind—

The painted pear of all our trees,  
The south slope towards the gooseberries  
Where all day long the sun is warm—  
Combining use with charm.

Did the pink tulips take your eye ?  
Or Breach's barn secure and high  
To guard you from some chance mishap  
Of gales through Shoreham gap ?

First you were spied a fighting pair  
Flashing and fluting here and there,  
Until in stealth the nest was made  
And graciously you stayed.

Now when I pause beneath your tree  
An anxious head peeps down at me,  
A crimson jewel in its crown,  
I looking up, you down :—

I wonder if my stripey shawl  
Seems pleasant in your eyes at all,  
I can assure you that your wings  
Are most delightful things.

Sweet birds, I pray, be not severe,  
Do not deplore our presence here,  
We cannot all be goldfinches  
In such a world as this.

The shaded lawn, the bordered flowers,  
We'll call them yours instead of ours,  
The pinks and the acacia tree  
Shall own your sovereignty.

And, if you let us, we will prove  
Our lowly and obsequious love,  
And when your little grey-pates hatch  
We'll help you to keep watch.

No prowling stranger cats shall come  
About your high celestial home,  
With dangerous sounds we'll chase them hence  
And ask no recompense.

And he, the Ethiope of our house,  
Slayer of beetle and of mouse,  
Huge, lazy, fond, whom we love well—  
Peter shall wear a bell.

Believe me, birds, you need not fear,  
No cages or limed twigs are here,  
We only ask to live with you  
In this green garden, too.

And when in other shining summers  
Our place is taken by new-comers,  
We'll leave them with the house and hill  
The goldfinches' good will.

Your dainty flights, your painted coats,  
The silver mist that is your notes,  
And all your sweet caressing ways  
Shall decorate their days.

And never will the thought of spring  
Visit our minds, but a gold wing  
Will flash among the green and blue,  
And we'll remember you.

PAMELA TENNANT

CXCVI

*SUMMER DUSK* \*

Now may we follow on his curving flight,  
The white owl mousing in the failing light ;  
And from the osiers in the river meads,  
Hear the sedge-warbler, chiding in the reeds.

*THE BIRDS\**

WITHIN mankind's duration, so they say,  
Khephren and Ninus lived but yesterday.  
Asia had no name till man was old  
And long had learned the use of iron and gold ;  
And æons had passed, when the first corn was planted,  
Since first the use of syllables was granted.

Men were on earth while climates slowly swung,  
Fanning wide zones to heat and cold, and long  
Subsidence turned great continents to sea,  
And seas dried up, dried up interminably,  
Age after age ; enormous seas were dried  
Amid wastes of land. And the last monsters died.

Earth wore another face. O since that prime  
Man with how many works has sprinkled time !  
Hammering, hewing, digging tunnels, roads ;  
Building ships, temples, multiform abodes.  
How, for his body's appetites, his toils  
Have conquered all earth's products, all her soils ;  
And in what thousand thousand shapes of art  
He has tried to find a language for his heart !

Never at rest, never content or tired :  
Insatiate wanderer, marvellously fired,  
Most grandly piling and piling into the air  
Stones that will topple or arch he knows not where.

And yet did I, this spring, think it more strange,  
More grand, more full of awe, than all that change,

And lovely and sweet and touching unto tears,  
That through man's chronicled and unchronicled years,  
And even unto that unguessable beyond,  
The water-hen has nested by a pond,  
Weaving dry flags into a beaten floor,  
The one sure product of her only lore,  
Low on a hedge above the shadowed water.  
Then, when she heard no men, as nature taught her,  
Plashing around with busy scarlet bill,  
She built that nest, her nest, and builds it still.

O let your strong imagination turn  
The great wheel backward, until Troy unburn,  
And then unbuild, and seven Troys below  
Rise out of death, and dwindle, and outflow,  
Till all have passed, and none has yet been there ;  
Back, ever back. Our birds still crossed the air ;  
Beyond our myriad changing generations  
Still built, unchanged, their known inhabitations.  
A million years before Atlantis was  
Our lark sprang from some hollow in the grass,  
Some old soft hoof-print in a tussock's shade ;  
And the wood-pigeon's smooth snow-white eggs were laid,  
High amid green pines' sunset-coloured shafts,  
And rooks their villages of twiggy rafts  
Set on the tops of elms, where elms grew then,  
And still the thumbing tit and perky wren  
Popped through the tiny doors of cosy balls  
And the blackbird lined with moss his high-built walls ;(1)  
A round mud cottage held the thrush's young,  
And straws from the untidy sparrow's hung.  
And, skimming fork-tailed in the evening air,  
When man first was were not the martins there ?

Did not those birds some human shelter crave,  
And stow beneath the cornice of his cave  
Their dry tight cups of clay ? And from each door  
Peeped on a morning wiseheads three or four.  
Yes, daw and owl, curlew and crested hern,  
Kingfisher, mallard, water-rail and tern,  
Chaffinch and greenfinch, warbler, stonechat, ruff,  
Pied wagtail, robin, fly-catcher, and chough,  
Missel-thrush, magpie, sparrow-hawk and jay,  
Built, those far ages gone, in this year's way.  
And the first man who walked the cliffs of Rame,  
As I this year, looked down and saw the same  
Blotches of rusty red on ledge and cleft  
With grey-green spots on them, while right and left  
A dizzying tangle of gulls were floating and flying,  
Circling and crying, over and over and over,  
Crying with swoop and hover and fall and recover.  
And below on a rock against the grey sea fretted,  
Pipe-necked and stationary and silhouetted,  
Cormorants stood in a wise, black, equal row  
Above the nests and long blue eggs we know.

O delicate chain over all the ages stretched,  
O dumb tradition from what far darkness fetched :  
Each little architect with its one design  
Perpetual, fixed and right in stuff and line,  
Each little ministrant who knows one thing,  
One learned rite to celebrate the spring.  
Whatever alters else on sea or shore,  
These are unchanging : man must still explore.

*THE GIFT*

You heavens proud above this earth,  
Have you no shade but blue ?  
Your flow'ring stars are all alike,  
But gold and silver hue :  
Your sun but one big iris-flower,  
Your clouds are fair but pass in shower ;  
Live there in your huge sky  
The hedge-rose or the campion  
Or purple dragon-fly ?

Poor beggar sky ! to you we'll send  
Out of our earthly store,  
Out of our thousand, thousand sights  
And then a million more,  
From all our shapes and colours fine,  
From all our unthrift beauty's mine,  
A crumb from all our feast,  
A gem from all our treasury,  
The lark—our best and least.



## NOTES

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| 33   | 1   | Translated by Wordsworth. The lines are a paraphrase of what was spoken or related to have been spoken by one of the nobles in Edwin's court during a Council occasioned by the mission of Paulinus. See Sir Francis Palgrave's <i>History of the Anglo-Saxons</i> , vol. 5, p. 40. As Wordsworth's version is a paraphrase rather than a translation, it may appear improper that I should have placed this and perhaps the following poem at the beginning of the book, particularly as the spelling is necessarily so different from that of other poems in their neighbourhood. But I have only spelt Chaucer's and early Scottish writers' poems as they were written, because to modernise is almost to bowdlerise them. And Wordsworth and Mangan (see following poem) have credit to spare for Bede and Gwylm, who did express a feeling for nature remarkable for their time, however tinged by a more literal modernism. |
| 34   | 2   | This original and delightful poem, modern in attitude, but with the special mediæval quality of a surprised confession of unlooked-for rapture in an immediate reaction to beauty, was translated by James Clarence Mangan. To what extent he modified or paraphrased it I do not know.  |
| —    | —   | (1) An example of amateur candour, not too common!   |
| —    | —   | (2) "My golden sister" is a poetic licence for the poet's mistress, who lived in Cheshire.   |
| 36   | 3   | "May-morning" is chiefly, of course, courtly, modish convention in Chaucer's day, but Chaucer's personal knowledge and love of nature made the fashion something more than an ornamental shell on the mantelpiece. There's a live animal in his shell. As A. W. Ward says, "he reminds us of his own fresh Canace, 'who of the foules knew all their intent.'"<br>From <i>The Romaunt of the Rose</i> , Fragment A.  |
| —    | —   | (1) Goldfinch.   |
| —    | —   | (2) Parrot (?).  |
| 37   | 4   | From <i>The Parlement of Foules</i> . There are other such allusions to old traditions and legends about birds in the poem, mingled with bits of truth about them, a bird to Chaucer being a real thing, as well as a convention.  |

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| 37   | 4   | (1) Apparently the first literary recognition of the ornithologist—and the last!   |
| —    | —   | (2) Pains, injuries, wounds.   |
| —    | —   | (3) The Peregrine: viz. Tercel gentle ("tassel gentle": <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> ).   |
| —    | —   | (4) Sparrowhawk.   |
| —    | —   | (5) Merlin.  |
| —    | —   | (6) Cock-bird.   |
| —    | —   | (7) Because of its wiliness in drawing an intruder from the nest.  |
| —    | —   | (8) The starling—through its powers of mimicry.  |
| —    | —   | (9) Robin.   |
| —    | —   | (10) Villages. Thorpeness in Suffolk; Thorpe, a suburb of Norwich.   |
| —    | —   | (11) Calleth.  |
| 38   | —   | (12) The Earl of Surrey had digested this line. "The swift swallow pursueth the flyes smale" occurs in his beautiful sonnet <i>Description of Spring</i> .   |
| —    | —   | (13) The avenger of adultery.  |
| —    | —   | (14) Both words mean "mate."   |
| 39   | 5   | From <i>The Parlement of Foules</i> .  |
| —    | —   | (1) Mate, viz. "I sing of a maiden<br>That is makeles."  |
| 40   | 6   | From <i>The Manciple's Tale</i> . It would be queer, perhaps, to meet this enlightenment, or rather knowledge of the truth, so early, were not the writer our Chaucer, the most personable poet in the language, whose heart is always so true and humanity so sound.  |
| 41   | 7   | From <i>The King's Quhair</i> , a fifteenth-century allegorical poem of strong colour, feeling, and liveliness, commemorating the poet's love for Lady Jane Beaufort. It was first published in 1783.  |
| —    | —   | (1) Twigs.   |
| —    | —   | (2) Time.  |
| 42   | 8   | From <i>The Goldin Terge</i> . Crabbe puts Dunbar on a level with Burns, and Scott says he has no rival in Scottish poetry, while his editor Dr. Baidon, freely compares him, in his power of satiric humour, with Chaucer. We need not trouble ourselves here with Dunbar's rank in the poetic academy, except to say that as a decorative master of the ceremonies in the May-morning convention he was, for all his elegance, much inferior to the Chaucer who breathed life into them. |
| —    | —   | (1) Star.  |
| —    | —   | (2) Diana.   |
| —    | —   | (3) Rose-garden.   |
| —    | —   | (4) Purified.  |
| —    | —   | (5) Curtains.  |
| —    | —   | (6) Float.   |

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| 42   | 8   | ( <sup>7</sup> ) Buds.  |
| —    | —   | ( <sup>8</sup> ) Like beryl.  |
| —    | —   | ( <sup>9</sup> ) Gleaming.  |
| —    | —   | ( <sup>10</sup> ) Overspread (a mackerel sky).  |
|      |     | ( <sup>11</sup> ) Gaps.   |
| 43   | 9   | ( <sup>1</sup> ) "Marees" = waters.   |
| —    | —   | ( <sup>1a</sup> ) "Acherontes well" = Acheron's well.   |
| —    | —   | ( <sup>1b</sup> ) "Blo" = livid.  |
| —    | —   | ( <sup>1c</sup> ) "Mare" = hag.   |
| 44   | —   | ( <sup>1d</sup> ) "Between my breastes soft." Catullus's <i>Ad Passerem Lesbiae</i> has the same. Catullus's famous poem was, of course, Skelton's model.   |
| —    | —   | ( <sup>1e</sup> ) "Proper and prest" = pretty (the French "mignon" better expresses it) and neat.   |
| 45   | —   | ( <sup>1f</sup> ) Nice = foolish or tricky.   |
| —    | —   | ( <sup>1g</sup> ) See William Wager (p. 53).  |
| 46   | —   | ( <sup>2</sup> ) A nunnery in a suburb of Norwich, founded 1146.  |
| —    | —   | ( <sup>3</sup> ) Untwined = torn to pieces.   |
| —    | —   | ( <sup>4</sup> ) Gripes = griffins.   |
| —    | —   | ( <sup>5</sup> ) Lycaon, King of Arcadia, was transformed into a wolf (Ovid: <i>Metamorphoses</i> ).  |
| 47   | —   | ( <sup>6</sup> ) Departed = parted.   |
| —    | —   | ( <sup>7</sup> ) Spare = "a striped triangular piece of cloth inserted at the bottom, on each side of a shift or of a robe" (Jamieson).   |
| 48   | —   | ( <sup>8</sup> ) Musse = mussle, i.e. mouth.  |
| —    | —   | ( <sup>9</sup> ) Jangling: a common epithet of old writers for the jay.   |
| —    | —   | ( <sup>10</sup> ) Red sparrow = reed bunting or reed or sedge warbler (see Drayton, p. 68).   |
| —    | —   | ( <sup>11</sup> ) Spink = chaffinch, from the alarm-note.   |
| —    | —   | ( <sup>12</sup> ) The dotterel's simulation of a broken wing to draw the enemy from her young gave birth to the legend that she imitates the fowler's gestures. Hence the libel on her <i>nous</i> .  |
| —    | —   | ( <sup>13</sup> ) Toot = pry.   |
| 49   | —   | ( <sup>14</sup> ) Snite = snipe.  |
| —    | —   | ( <sup>15</sup> ) Solf = solfa.   |
| —    | —   | ( <sup>16</sup> ) Woodhack = woodpecker.  |
| —    | —   | ( <sup>16a</sup> ) Mur = catarrh.   |
| —    | —   | ( <sup>17</sup> ) Popinjay = parrot.  |
| —    | —   | ( <sup>18</sup> ) Toteth = pryeth.  |
| —    | —   | ( <sup>19</sup> ) Bitter with his bump = bittern with his boom. The bird is still known locally as "bitterbump," "bog bumper." Drayton, Crabbe, Burns (p. 149), and Wordsworth have lines about the bittern, and there is an interesting poem by "A Fen Parson" (1900) referring to the bird. |
| —    | —   | ( <sup>20</sup> ) Menander = Maeander.  |
| 50   | —   | ( <sup>21</sup> ) Gant = gander. But here possibly gannet.  |
| —    | —   | ( <sup>21a</sup> ) Viz. = the knot and the ruff.  |

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- 50 9 (22) Barnacle = bernacle goose, reputed by the early naturalists, impressed by the wonders of nature, to have been born of the barnacle = mollusc.
- — (23) Divendap = dabchick. Shakespeare's dive-dapper.
- — (24) Throstle = here the missel-thrush. Mavis, above, is the song-thrush.
- — (25) fraye = fright. The legend was that the osprey, while hovering over the water for fish, became fascinated and turned up its belly.
- — (26) sedean = subdean or subdeacon (?).
- — (27) Demean = conduct.
- — (28) Ordinal = ritual.
- — (29) The tassel (a corruption of tiercel) gentle was the male of the peregrine falcon, the sovereign bird in falconry, and not of the goshawk, as Dyce (Skelton: *Poetical Works*) says, though ancient writers often confuse the goshawk and the peregrine. Walton in *The Compleat Angler* makes no such mistake, correctly placing the "tassel-gentle" among the long-winged hawks and the goshawk among the short-winged.
- 51 — (30) The sacre is described by Turberville (*Booke of Falconrie*) as "much like the Falcon Gentle for largenesse and the Haggart for hardines."
- — (31) The true lanner is the sacred falcon of the ancient Egyptians, and the modern *Falco aræris*. But Skelton's lanner is lost in the obscurities of terms of falconry. Marlion = merlin, the little blue hawk of the moorlands.
- — (32) Musket = the male sparrow-hawk. The hobby, which can outwing swallows, was used in falconry for taking larks. Members of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds to-day prefer the merlin.
- — (33) Could anything be more charming than this blend of paganism and Christianity, of Romish and Roman theology? Skelton, of course, is as alive to the appealing reconciliation of his exquisite nun's heavens as Chaucer is alive to the Wife of Bath's pious expounding of the good life. But many of our mediæval writers lisped piety and blasphemy (as the dogmatism of later ages would call it) in one breath with a sweetness and simplicity disarming (one hopes) even to the theologian. *Philip Sparrow* was written before the end of 1508, as Barclay's *Ship of Fooles*, published in that year, mentions it with contempt (Dyce, *Skelton's Poetical Works*). Coleridge called it "an exquisite and original poem." Indeed, the first-hand poets know how to telescope a variety of emotions, sometimes conflicting, into a unity, being tender, mocking, passionate, shy, whimsical, gay, and melancholy all in a breath of music. So "old Skelton" and Marvell in his *Lines to his Coy Mistress*, one of the most perfect examples

- in literature. To flick the ear of beauty need not be to love her any the less.
- 52 10 From the poet's translation of the *Aeneid* (1513), with the exception of that of Boethius, which is negligible, the first metrical version of a classic. See Warton's *History of English Poetry*, vol. 3. This is the best work of a poet whose affectations, conventionalisms, anglicisms of Latin words, and otiose style badly silted up the flow of his verse. A complete edition of Douglas was edited by John Small in 1874.
- 52 10 (1) Crows, so coos (*Gammer Gurtons Needle*).
- — (1<sup>a</sup>) Preens. The Shakespearian "picked" (spruced out).
- — (2) Fine tunes.
- — (3) Chirps (Herrick: "chirring grasshopper").
- — (4) Linnet.
- — (5) Firmament.
- — (6) Twittereth.
- — (6<sup>a</sup>) Rushed.
- — (6<sup>b</sup>) Groves.
- — (7) Twigs.
- — (8) Resounding, humming.
- — (9) Mounting.
- — (10) Praised their lady.
- — (11) Who build.
- — (12) Restorer.
- 53 11 From the Tudor interlude *The Longer thou Livest the more Fool thou art*. The ditty is probably made up of older tags, ballads, and songs stitched together. The last four lines reappear in a modified form in the Rump song:
- " Oliver Cromwell lies buried and dead,  
Hey ho ! buried and dead."
- 54 12 This beautiful poem, in which convention does no injury to feeling, is from *Certain Sonets written by Sir Philip Sidney*, first published in the folio of 1598. The first stanza, all but the last line, appears in Thomas Bateson's *First Set of English Madrigals: to Three, Four, Five, and Six Voices* (1604).
- 55 13 1596.
- — (1) Compare with Keats (p. 180).
- 56 14 Published with *Amoretti* (1595).
- — (1) "Descant" is variation of the movement of music without altering the subject.
- 57 15 From *Summer's Last Will and Testament* (1592).
- 58 16 From *Alexander and Campaspe* (1584). The songs did not appear until the collected edition of 1632.
- — (1) "Prick-song" is "harmony written or pricked down in opposition to plain-song, where the descant rested with the will of the singer" (Chappell). The variety and rich-

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- ness of the nightingale's song caused it to be called "prick-song" by early writers. So the cuckoo's notes are plain-song.
- 59 17 (1) Geck = jest.  
 — — (1<sup>a</sup>) Deave = deafen.  
 — — (2) Pawn = peacock. From *The Cherry and the Slae*—a top-heavy allegorical poem with Virtue and Vice as the lion and the unicorn. But there are a few cheerful inns on the way through it, and Burns is supposed to have owed something to this style of versification.
- 60 18 From *Midsummer Night's Dream*.  
 61 19 From *A Winter's Tale*.  
 — — (1) Thievish.  
 62 20 From *Love's Labour's Lost*.  
 — — (1) See W. H. Davies, *The East in Gold*—the cock, "Time-keeper on green farms."  
 — — (2) Skim.
- 63 21 *Romeo and Juliet*, Act 3, Scene 5. It would be a repulsive form of vivisection to chop out the lines strictly relevant to this book from the context. The passage must stand as a whole, if only to show that Romeo was a better ornithologist than divine Juliet. And in a world where night was light and day darkness, she may well be forgiven by science for confusing lark with nightingale.
- 65 22 From *Macbeth*, Act 1, Scene 3.  
 65 — Love, not truth, exempts Shakespeare from the errors of observation, the myths and inventions derived from traditional natural history in which all his contemporaries floundered. They naturally took the word from Maplet, Gesner, Harrison, and Holland's translation of Pliny. Nevertheless, Shakespeare's work contains a greater abundance of animal lore than any other contemporary poet's or dramatist's except Lyly. (*Euphues*—a mine of misinformation.) The birds he refers to are the wren ("the most diminutive of birds"), mallard, snipe, plover, (lapwing), quail, woodcock, partridge, pheasant, cormorant ("this cormorant war"—"cormorant devouring time," etc.), swan (for its fabled dying song), dabchick ("Like a dive-dapper peering through a wave, Who being look'd on, ducks as quickly in"), nightingale, thristle, blackbird (viz. ousel), lark, redbreast (ruddock), wagtail (as a term of contempt for a toady, viz. dishwasher from the still surviving name of "Polly Dish Wash"), raven, crow, and magpie (the "unclean" birds), rook, kite (puttock), jay, jackdaw (used as a type of folly in *Henry VI* and *Coriolanus*), chough (in the famous reference to the samphire gatherer), starling, eagle, vulture, osprey, various other hawks (falconry), ostrich, and parrot (popinjay).
- 66 23 From *The Passionate Pilgrim* (1640). Saintsbury is

- inclined to attribute it to Shakespeare, as being above Barnfield's head, and there are, of course, Shakespeare songs in the collection, which is a storehouse for stolen goods. But where there is any doubt, the lesser man should always have the benefit of it. Shakespeare is a plutocrat already, without pauperising his littler fellows.
- 66 23 (1) Pandion, in the legend, was the father of Philomela.
- 67 24 From *Polyolbion*—The Thirteenth Song (1612).
- — (1) "Of all birds only the blackbird whistleth" (Drayton's note).
- 68 — (2) The reed-bunting, which has a weak, jingling song. More probably the sedge-warbler or reed-warbler.
- — (2) The bullfinch. Local variants = Mwope, Hope, and Pope.
- — (4) The yellowhammer (?).
- — (5) Possibly Drayton thought goldfinches were the parental stock of canaries.
- — (6) The tydy or tidy seems to be the golden-crested wren, which has a penetrating though little-varied song, and used to be called the tidley-goldfinch in Devonshire. It might, however, be the same as Chaucer's tidee, which appears to be a titmouse.
- — (7) The hecco or hick-way (see p. 105) is the yaffle. This is one of the most spirited and precise descriptions of birds among the Elizabethan writers, to whom they were little more than the team of Venus's chariot.
- 69 25 From *The Vision of Delight*.
- 70 26 From *The Shoemaker's Holiday* (1600). The cuckoo, doubtless from the name, was the ill-omened bird of cuckoldry. As it is a polyandrous bird in fact, the Elizabethans wrote better than they knew. See Shakespeare's cuckoo song.
- 71 27 From *Britannia's Pastorals*. The first book was published in 1613, the second in 1616, the two together in 1625, and the third posthumously.
- 72 28 From *Comedies, Tragi-Comedies, with Other Poems* (1651). One of the better of the many paraphrases of Catullus's famous song.
- 74 29 From *Flowers of Sion* (1623). Marino has a sonnet on the same theme.
- 75 30 From *Poems* (1614). A strain that Milton heard when he wrote "O Nightingale that on yon bloomy spray." The beautiful conceit of "Night . . . become all ear" reminds one of Milton's "Silence was pleased." There is a delicate iridescent play of spirit in Drummond's Sonnets which saves them, highly polished and technically expert as they are, and relying upon foreign models as they do, from imitation and formality.
- 76 31 From *The Rape of Lucrece* (1608).

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- 77 32 From *The Fair Maid of the Exchange* (1607). The Elizabethans' treatment of the countryside as a kind of labour exchange for the hiring of feathered minstrels to serenade their mistresses is so common as to make criticism superfluous. We do best but to remark and then accept it.
- 79 33 From *Trivial Poems and Triolets*, written in 1651, "in obedience to Mrs. Tomkins's commands," and discovered and published by Scott in 1819. Two much poorer stanzas omitted. Cary, the younger brother of Lord Falkland, has—with all deference to Prof. Saintsbury's contrary opinion—nothing to him but this tribute to nature's better verse-making. See my *Seventeenth-Century English Verse*, p. 324, for a note upon him. For the change of attitude to nature see notes on Hall and Vaughan (pp. 87 and 96).
- 81 34 From *The Delights of the Muses*. The most complete seventeenth-century edition of Crashaw was in 1670. *Music's Duel* is, from one point of view, one of the most extraordinary poems in all English literature. For brilliance of execution, intricate handling, and scattered felicities of phrase, it is almost without a rival, and the strategic mastery over masses of raw levies of words is astonishing. From another point of view it is a unique Crystal Palace display of coloured lights. One feels the artistry, the coldness, the wonder, and the artificiality of it all at once. One finds it difficult to believe that the writer of *Music's Duel* was a religious poet of an ardour hardly earthly. But there was a strong sensuous, even voluptuous, element in Crashaw which reaches a pitch of refined expression in this poem as wonderful as Crashaw's own enchanting use of language. But somehow, as in *Ariel*, a soul is wanting. Nor does it respond to a beautiful definition of poetry by Keats in a letter to Taylor: "Poetry should be great and unobtrusive, a thing which enters into one's soul, and does not startle or amaze it with itself, but with its subject." Yet to the nightingale's blaze of song, what a tribute!
- 87 35 From *Poems* (1646). For comment upon the new, objective treatment of nature, see note on Vaughan (p. 96).
- 88 36 From *Hesperides* (1648). The same poem with slight verbal differences and "William Redley" for "Robin Herrick" appears anonymously in Henry Bold's miscellany *Wit a sporting in a pleasant Grove of New Fancies* (1657).
- 89 37 From *Hesperides*. Before Philomel became the nightingale, we may well overlook the greatness of sorrow thrust upon her—who should be him—for the sake of the grace and buoyancy of songs like this one. It is after she

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emerged from her woe and put on feathers for sackcloth that we feel inclined to commiserate her (him) for the continued pity of the poets, in Miltonic strains :

“ What needs the nightingale for his burdened bones,  
The sorrow of an age in poets' groans ? ”

But even Herrick's Philomel is beginning to hatch from the egg of legend, and the admission to Hades of even half a bird is a touching and beautiful modernism which a great many moderns would not allow. And even in the modern era has the nightingale succeeded in escaping the incubus of being a woman with a past ? “ She ” still weeps away her nights in song, having lamented steadily up to Matthew Arnold and beyond, wasting her time, as a naturalist justly says, in “ melodious sorrows,” instead of minding her business and keeping the chill off her eggs.

90 38 From *Hesperides*.

91 39 From *Sonnets and Canzone*—“ Poems on Several Occasions ” (1673).

— — (1) A notion derived from Chaucer's *Cuckoo and Nightingale* :

“ But as I lay this othir night waking,  
I thought how lovers had a tokening,  
And among hem it was a commerne tale  
That it were gode to hear the Nightingale  
Moche rathir than the leude Cuckowe singe ”

92 40 From *Paradise Lost*, Bk. 7 (1667).

— — (1) Migration seems first to have been recorded by the Jews. (See J.H. Gurney, *Annals of Ornithology*.) Milton took the material of this passage from them rather than Pliny.

— — (2) How admirably labour-saving were the foreseeing dispensations of Providence, who on the fifth day created the cock and the swan, all ready domesticated (the wild swan does not arch its neck), before the advent of man on the sixth !

93 41 From *Upon Appellton House* (*Miscellaneous Poems*, folio, 1681).

One naturally associates felicities of expression and melody with the seventeenth century, but hardly close observation. In this respect the extract is so remarkable that I have not scrupled to head it “ The Forest Naturalist.” The description of the green woodpecker in Willoughby's *Ornithology* (1678) is almost as inferior to it in accuracy as in beauty. Marvell's power of identifying himself with his subject through his sensibility is strongly marked in the last lines, which seem a prelude to the famous “ My soul into the boughs . . . ”

— — (1) The poet, of course, means the ring-dove.

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| 94   | 41  | ( <sup>2</sup> ) Hewel or hewhole = green woodpecker.  |
| —    | —   | ( <sup>3</sup> ) Holt-felster = forester.  |
| 95   | 42  | From <i>Silex Scintillans</i> , Part II (1655). The first edition—1650—does not contain Part II). Five stanzas omitted, by which the poem does not lose.   |
| 95   | 42  | ( <sup>1</sup> ) Tined, i.e. closed, a word surviving in Northern rural dialect up to quite recently.  |
| 96   | 43  | From <i>Silex Scintillans</i> . Two last, irrelevant, and inferior stanzas omitted. This poem is more revolutionary than any in the <i>Lyrical Ballads</i> , because it had so few precedents and grew in a less timely and auspicious soil than they did. In it and a few other poems of Vaughan's, Nature appears in her own biography and not as an appendix to the confessions of the human heart. Birds, flowers, and fields have hitherto been the projection of personal moods, symbols for the amorist, theatrical properties in the staging of human passion. Natural life was relative to human feeling alone, and so inanimate apart from it. Vaughan restored to Nature her birth-right and peopled the earth with new beings. By such a revelation he contributed to the deposition of man as the alpha and omega of life, and saw creation not only as an indwelling but an impartial spirit. Vaughan in his way is thus a prophet of Darwinism. |
| 97   | 44  | From <i>Anacreontics</i> . Refreshing this, after a sad satiety of artless songsters, pretty quiristers, and ravished nightingales.  |
| 99   | 46  | Some stanzas omitted. This very rare poem is taken from Dibdin's <i>Typographical Antiquities</i> , IV, 380. Latham says: "This is a most curious tract. Mr. Herbert seems to think that it may have been written by Skelton, being entirely in his manner." Dibdin agrees with Latham; but the poem is not by Skelton, nor, except quite superficially, is it at all in his manner. Doggerel as the verses are, they have something (especially in the fourteenth stanza) of that heart-searching sweetness which the unified, unperplexed vision of the Middle Ages gave to man.   |
| 103  | 47  | ( <sup>1</sup> ) Turf.   |
| —    | —   | ( <sup>2</sup> ) Neck.   |
| —    | —   | ( <sup>3</sup> ) Thatch.   |
| 104  | 48  | These curious verses were printed in the second edition of <i>Tottell's Miscellany of Songes and Sonnettes</i> (1557), under the heading of <i>Twenty-Nine Additional Poems by Uncertain Auctours</i> .  |
| 105  | 49  | From John Bartlett's <i>A Book of Ayres with a Triplicite of Musick</i> , "whereof the First Part is for the Lute or Orpharion, and the Viole de Gambo, and 4 Partes to sing, The second part is for 2 Trebles to sing to the Lute and   |

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Viole, The third part is for the Lute and one Voice, and the Viole de Gambo " (1606).

105 49 (1) *Hic-quail* = hick-way or hecco ("the laughing hecco," Drayton's *Polyolbion*), a popular name for the green woodpecker. This, no doubt, is a corruption of the same word and has nothing to do with the quail. But "parti-coloured coat" suggests the greater spotted woodpecker, especially as his double chirp follows upon the "ka-ka" of the daw. Here, then, is the first literary reference to this bird in our literature, and probably the solitary one in poetry.

— — (2) *Kites*, now almost extinct, were the common scavengers of Elizabethan London.

106 — (3) *Severals*. A several was an enclosed pasture, as distinguished from a common or open field. The word occurs in *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Troilus and Cressida*, and *The Winter's Tale*.

The first and second of these charming songs are remarkable for an objective sympathy with and direct knowledge of birds extremely rare to the age. Praise of the owl is indeed as rare among English poets as the golden oriole in England, and the prejudice is not confined to the earlier periods. Where the "unacknowledged legislators" lead the way, it were optimistic to expect any better of the gamekeeper! There is, of course, a wide difference between the poet's direct assumption that the owl is a grim, an unhallowed, a "moping," or funereal bird by nature and the melancholy impression of its hoot, nocturnal associations, stealthiness, etc., upon his own mood. The latter is always legitimate; the former, in a modern poet, certainly not.

107 50 From Robert Jones's *The First Set of Madrigals of 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 parts, for Viols and Voices, or for Voices alone; or as you please* (1607).

108 51 From Thomas Weelkes's *Ayeres or Phantasticke Spirites for three voices* (1608). And I heard recently of a human dragon for righteousness who shoots cuckoos because they are immoral!

109 52 From Thomas Morley's *Madrigales: The Triumphes of Oriana, to 5 and 6 voices: composed by divers severall aucthors* (1601). Edward Johnson was the actual composer, the volume, written in honour of Queen Elizabeth, being edited by Morley.

— — (1) Bonny-boots has not been identified, but he was "evidently a dancer and singer in considerable favour with Queen Elizabeth" (A. N. Fellowes, *English Madrigal Verse*).

— — (2) A recorder was a wind-instrument of the flute family (idem).

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- 110 53 From Thomas Vautour's *The First Set: Being Songs of divers Ayres and Natures, of Five and Sixe parts: Apt for Vyols and Voices* (1619).
- 111 54 From John Bartlett's *A Book of Ayres . . .*"
- 112 — (1) A peat, according to Nares, is "a delicate person; usually applied to a young female, but often, ironically, as meaning a spoiled, pampered favourite." "Pet" is no doubt the same word. It occurs in *The Taming of the Shrew*.
- 114 56 This song appears in one of the modern *Spectator* letters, and is presumably an Elizabethan paraphrase of Charles d'Orleans's competitive carol—a perfect lyrical matching of human with bird language:
- " La gentille alouette  
Avec son tire-lire-a-lire  
Et tire-lire-a-lire  
Tirelirant tire  
Vers la vouÛtre du ciel,  
Puis son vol vers ce lieu  
Vire  
Et désire dire:  
Adieu Dieu!  
Adieu Dieu!"
- 115 57 From Henry Lawes's *Book of Ayres*, 1650.
- 116 58 Among the numerous variants of this folk-rhyme, which differ from county to county, I select the following:
- " In March, the guku beginth to sarch;  
In Aperial, he beginth to tell;  
In May, he beginth to lay;  
In June, he altereth 'is tune;  
In July, away a dith vly."  
(Devonshire.)
- " The cuckoo's a bonny bird, he whistles as he flies,  
He brings us good tidings, he tells us no lies;  
He sucks little birds' eggs to make his voice clear,  
And never sings cuckoo till summer draws near.  
Sings cuckoo in April, cuckoo in May,  
Cuckoo in June and then flies away."  
(Northumberland.)
- 119 59 From *Hudibras* (1663). The extract is given in *The Naturalist's Poetical Companion*, a very rare (it is not in the British Museum) and curious anthology, dated 1833—one of an extinct genus of books which began about 1810, flourished in the thirties, and had vanished by 1860.
- 120 60 From *The Hind and the Panther*. This is a creditable account when we remember the opinion of the wise men of the eighteenth century that birds migrated to the moon

—which reveals a steep decline in the study of the Bible, wherein migration is more attentively recorded. Dryden avoided committing himself to naming the destination by the poetic licence of "it concerns us not to know." Both hind and panther draw upon other species to point the moral and adorn the tale, Halifax's and Prior's parody confining itself to mice.

The theories of old writers upon migration, especially swallows, are very engaging. The Book of Job in "Doth the hawk fly by thy wisdom, and stretch her wings towards the south?" marks the autumnal migration of birds of prey in the East, and the *Iliad* alludes to the gathering of waders on the mud-flats of Asiatic rivers, and the southern flight of the cranes before the winter. Anacreon mentions the Nile as the winter resort of the swallows, and Aristotle (*Historia Animalium*) gives a more or less correct general account of the migration of cranes, pelicans, quail, rock-, ring-, and turtle-doves, landrails, "eared owls," swans, and geese. But he fathers centuries of error, right up to Gilbert White (who owed his howler largely to the pernicious influence of Daines Barrington), by his tale of swallows wintering in holes. Aristotle, too, was the "onlie begetter" in print of the "transmutation" theory, nursed to the present day, when some gamekeepers still believe that the cuckoo does not migrate, but is metamorphosed into a hawk. But it was the Middle Ages which stamped in speculation. Olaus Magnus in *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus et Natura* (1555) is highly circumstantial concerning the hibernation of swallows at the bottom of ponds, whence, mingled with fish, they were drawn by fishermen. Cuvier, Linnaeus, the Royal Society and the French Academy in the eighteenth century all accepted this, the gathering of swallows in reed-beds before migration probably being the origin of the myth. But it was a rare little tract published in 1703 by "A Person of Learning and Piety" which propounded the solution to which Dryden refers elsewhere in the poem quoted here—that swallows migrate to the moon. Francis Willoughby's *Ornithology* (1678) alone withstood the all-levelling blast of faith about the swallows.

- 122 61 From *Aesop*. Cage-birds can and do borrow whole phrases of each other's songs. Usually the finer the singer among wild birds (*viz.* the marsh warbler), the greater the mimic and vice versa. But that finished artist, the nightingale, is an exception, and in freedom is never, like the thrush, a mimic. Though captivity greatly modifies the habits and capacities of birds, the poet's nightingale here is probably the bird of convention.
- 123 62 Green's poems, consisting of *The Spleen*, *The Grotto*, *The*

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- Seeker*, etc., and some smaller pieces, were not published until after his death, in 1737. The dissenting education of his youth seems to have been responsible for the free scepticism, the witty, original detachment of mind, and some of the ironical melancholy of his manhood, without curdling his sweetness of disposition. In verse, he makes a more masculine, if less delicate and harmonious, Cowper.
- 126 64 The philosophy and imagination of these fine lines, so curiously anticipating a later knowledge, are not those we commonly associate either with Pope or his age. The humaneness of the eighteenth century is usually that of a country squire or a London fine gentleman. Pope, Thomson, and Cowper are notable exceptions. Only a portion of nature's art-galleries is open to man's unaided eyes.
- 127 65 From *Spring*.
- 131 66 From *Autumn*.
- — With the exciting sense that I was utterly alone in literary London and trafficking with the black arts in a way to loose the thunders of the literary bishops about my head, I began to read the *Seasons* and went on reading them in horrid heresy unto the very end. The truth is that it is snobbish to leave Thomson in the dustbin—to wit, the outside book-boxes in the Charing Cross Road. Not that one holds with the hymnal ecstasies, ancient and modern, of some textbooks. The eighteenth-century critics appear to regard Thomson as the bull in the china-shop or the spirited stallion escaped among the flower-beds. "The natural fervour of the man," they and even later biographers write, "overpowered the rules of the scholar." "The power of Thomson lay not in his art, but the exuberance of his genius . . . The poetic glow is spread over all." Another finds him "all negligence and nature," pouring forth an unpremeditated song, which has "all the rudeness and luxuriance of its theme." "His Spring blossoms and gives forth its beauty like a daisied meadow; and his summer landscapes have all the sultry warmth and green luxuriance of June." Coleridge's view is truer to the facts: "The love of nature seems to have led Thomson to a cheerful religion; and a gloomy religion to have led Cowper to a love of nature. The one would carry his fellow-men along with him into nature; the other flies to nature from his fellow-men. In chastity of diction, however, and the harmony of blank verse (in which the *Seasons* is written) Cowper leaves Thomson immeasurably below him, yet I still feel the latter to have been the born poet." Thomson is indeed a born poet, not a star-crazy, flame-haired planet-conjurer as another Thomson said of Shelley and his early apologists seem to

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think of him, but a poet of a true if sober and tenuous imagination, of a seeing eye and a fertile imagery—all pruned and weeded and lawned like a London park by the routine sentiments and phraseology of the "Age of Reason."

It is profitable to read him steadily (he died middle-aged in 1748), for the poet is always cropping up, and breaking out inexpressibly like an imp of mischief in Dr. Thwackem's Academy, or as a sprig in the mutilated limes of our suburbs, or the good in us bad men. He should be heard on the "British Fair." He draws the line at their taking part in the "sportive fury" of fox-hunting: "Let not such horrid joy E'er stain the bosom of the British Fair." Theirs but to "teach the lute to languish," floating the limbs in "the loose simplicity of dress"; for them "'tis graceful to dissolve in woe" and "from the smallest violence to shrink." Mixed nutting, however, he allows. So he goes lumbering on, moralising and philosophising with all the apparent self-enjoyment of the born bore—until he flowers into this passage on migration. There is more of it, and I have not read elsewhere a passage so true to the tumult, the giddiness, the mighty precipitance of migration. And these passages, or it may be stray lines and metaphors and adjectives ("the light-footed dews") are as common as poppies in a cornfield. I could give a score of them, and some of them long, out of each "Season."

Thomson's rightness of feeling, again, as of one who saw with his heart as well as his eyes, is not the least taking thing about him. He was a poet of a very heretical humanity in a Squire Western age.

133 67 Jago, a Cornishman, friend of Shenstone, and author of the long, unreadable *Edgehill*, is a poet who deserves to be known at least as well as his stilted friend. True Sensibility, as distinguished from the eighteenth-century brand, need not fear to admit this poem as one of the faithful from the ranks of the pretenders; nor Simplicity a follower whose clothes are not his heart.

137 68 (1) A curious anticipation of the modern discoveries as to the territorial rights exercised by birds. I have omitted the last few stanzas of this poem. Jago is one of the very few eighteenth-century poets who without effort or revolt or conscious purpose has subdued the conventions in which he wrote, and to which he was unswervingly loyal, into passable poetic expression. Rushy meads, vocal throngs, finny monsters, happy lawns, verdant alleys, genial prospects, rural trains, grateful pastures, balmy dews, sportive lambs, and pleasing themes—the old familiar faces visit us in mobs. But they affect us less artificially

than Wordsworth himself, who often wrote exactly in the manner of the eighteenth-century pastoralists, does. This is not in the least to say that Jago is an immortal missed his crown, but that we read about nymphs in groves just as though they were girls in woods, so essentially does the author's serene, innocent, unconscious truth to himself, to his feelings and his idea of nature assimilate all the makeshifts and artifices of the dreariest idiom ever invented by literary foppery. He is the least assertive of writers, and his words are like China ornaments on the mantelpiece of a seaside lodging-house. It is amazing he should get anywhere with such trumpery. The second stanza of this poem says nothing, and yet Spring is caught into the rusty snare. The feeling in the lines is just right and true, and the gaudy word-decoys of "The hounds of spring are on winter's traces . . ." clatter empty in the wind.

It is interesting that more or less about the time that Logan was burgling Bruce's Cuckoo poems (see p. 139) Gilbert West (see Dr. Johnson's *Lives*) was staking a claim to Jago's *Blackbirds*. I am indebted to Mr. J. C. Squire for putting me on Jago's track.

139 69 The authorship of this taking poem, which Wordsworth knew and probably took as a model (there are lines in it as beautiful as any in his), as he did Vaughan's *The Retreat*, was attributed to John Logan. Bruce's papers fell into Logan's hands at his death at the age of 21 (in 1767), and he published the poems under his own name. Burke was so struck with it that he sought out Logan, who can hardly have been happy at receiving the praises of another man's work. It is romantic to think of him as overwhelmed with contrition at the circumstance; before such a vengeance of the injured, he was more likely to have acknowledged the truth of "odere quem laeseris." The controversy as to the authorship of the poem is not, however, completely settled. In 1892 was published "a complete vindication of the Rev. John Logan from the charge of stealing the hymns of Michael Bruce" by W. T. Maston. It was answered by James Mackenzie in his *Life of Michael Bruce* (1905).

- 141 70 (1) Goldfinch.  
 — — (2) Bless.  
 — — (3) Plundered.  
 — — (4) Different-coloured stripes.  
 — — (5) Marvels.  
 — — (6) Trial-piece.  
 — — (7) Cherished.  
 142 — (8) Snares.  
 — — (9) Shut.

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142	70	(10) Daisied.
—	—	(11) Resort.
—	—	(12) Without strength.
—	—	(13) Body.
—	—	(14) Look.
—	—	(15) Lads.
—	—	(16) Flattery.
—	—	(17) Haughty.
—	—	(18) Huff.
143	—	(19) Devil a fly.
—	—	(20) Gloomy.
—	—	(21) Bill.
—	—	(22) Lose.
—	—	(23) Heed.
—	—	(24) Box for meal.
—	—	(25) Prostitute.

People in the south country have long forgotten the Gilbert White of Edinburgh in the seventies of the Age of Reason, to some extent the model of Burns and the author of poems like the *Ode to Pity, On Night, The Sow of Feeling, The Farmer's Ingle* (the obvious parent of the *Cottar's Saturday Night*), *Guid Braid Claeth, Auld Reekie, Cauler Water*, and others. Fergusson's work is sketchy (he was murdered in his 24th year), but it is warm and real and human; and for a happy dancing burlesque, a sparkle and quickness of perception in portraits of types and town manners, a fertility of expression and tenderness of feeling (rarely kindled to intensity), and a kind of whimsical mock-solemnity, he had a touch of genius—the doomed, the luckless wretch.

Fergusson was born in Edinburgh in 1750. From his early boyhood he suffered from religion and bad health, and there is a story that he once went weeping to his mother, begging to be whipped: "O mother!" he cried, "he that spareth the rod hateth the child." At St. Andrews, where he was sent to prepare himself for imparting devil-worship to others, he first began to commit "the sin of rhyme" (I quote from a sympathetic biography published to his poems in 1807); and as sin is sweet and human flesh is frail, he left St. Andrews drenched in evil, and was promptly ejected from his uncle's house for another crime—that of shabbiness. So he became an assistant in the office of the Commissary-clerk in Edinburgh, and in this situation he began to run down the short and steep road of dissipation which led the pious and respectable elements in his native city finally to spew him out of their mouths. He failed in "the acquisition of business habits"; he preferred the company of tavern-parties to that of the Methodists; he played little pranks on the

devout; he published ribaldries in *Ruddiman's Weekly Magazine*; and—he began to question the authenticity of the fall of man, on the ground that the doctrine was inconsistent with the love and mercy of God. What can have possessed a man of such parts, brought up in the knowledge of a prosperous and religious society, to have associated its deity with pity, with anything merciful or loving, is not related in this parable of unrighteousness. At any rate, the divine vengeance did not sleep. Robert, courted for his wit and brilliance by all the publicans and sinners of the city, became on somewhat free terms with the former, and, coming home from his potations one night, he fell down and got a slight concussion of the brain. This was followed by all the torments of remorse, and, while in this wildered state, he was induced to take the air with a company of friends and carried off post-haste to the asylum. When he discovered the trick he “uttered a scream of horror and despair,” and little it availed him, for two months later he died “in the solitude of his cell,” “without a hand to help or an eye to pity him,” and with Bedlam raging about him. Edinburgh and Methodism went on with their business. We are a little more genteel to-day, and the poetic sprite within us is not a blasphemy, but a luxury, as well regarded as a hat-ribbon.

Half Fergusson's poems are in the vernacular, half in eighteenth-century English. His poems were first published in 1773.

- 144 71 From *Poems, Epistles, etc.* Cp. Hardy's *The Wagtail* and Wilfrid Scawen Blunt's *Sed nos qui vivimus*. One of Burns's *Letters* has the following: “I never hear the loud solitary whistle of the curlew in a summer noon, or the mild cadence of a troop of grey plovers in an autumn morning without feeling an elevation of soul like the enthusiasm of devotion or poetry.”

A bird's fear of man is no more a germinal legacy than his song. Both are individual and acquired through filial imitation. Darwin pushed a Galapagos hawk off his perch with the muzzle of his gun, and the explorers of Mount Everest had birds come and perch on their shoulders in the higher regions. Robinson Crusoe might have detected the presence of man on his island as soon as he landed, had he had a little natural history among his other accomplishments. And if man ever ceases to be the demon of the universe in the eyes of other animals, we shall in this respect realise once more the conditions belonging to the flintless ancestors of *Pithecanthropus Erectus*. From humanoids with their coliths to twentieth-century man with his gun, we have never ceased to pursue birds.

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Yet as soon as we lay aside our instinct to prey upon them, they lay aside their acquired fears of us. The quick-minded, educable bird learns in no time to distinguish a human well-wisher from an enemy.

146 72 From *Songs and Ballads*. It would be gross to criticise this perfect poem on the ground that woodlarks don't complain. The woodlark is the sweetest singer we have, and so, one is inclined to say, is Burns. If the woodlark sings like Burns and Burns like the woodlark, shall not the "truth to nature" prevail? "If poetry comes not as naturally as leaves to a tree," writes Keats, "it had better not come at all." There are other ways of "imitating nature" than by the copyist's. But I am bound to say that the "woodlark" here is the tree-pipit.

147 73 From "A rosebush by my early walk" (*Songs and Ballads*). To detach this piece from the context is perhaps to pluck a petal from the brier; but how dear, how perfect, the morsel!

148 74 Even when Burns forces himself into the dress-suit of an alien language, which he wears like a parvenu, his true feeling, his genuineness, his tenderness as a man and a brother to life emerge. This attractive poem was sent me by a friend and is, I believe, very little known.

149 75 Verses 7, 8, 9, and 10. How fresh and springlike comes the music of a poet who has plucked his notes from nature's own wild garden! The bittern was a mere obituary notice a few years ago. Thanks to zealous protection in Norfolk, a bird I have had the privilege of hearing "roar" like the looms of life is coming alive again.

— — (1) Roar.

— — (2) Elvish.

— — (3) Wakeful.

150 76 From *Songs and Ballads*.

— — (1) Not, of course, the waterhen (merehen), but the "moor fowl" or red grouse.

151 77 From *The Task*, "The Winter Morning Walk."

153 79 Translated from Vincent Bourne.

156 81 Rousseau held that all fables which attribute rational faculties and speech to animals should be withheld from children, as conveying deception. The bullfinch, for all the colour-tune of its plumage and the soft modulation of its flute, receives the scantiest notice from the poets.

— — These story-poems of Cowper's possess something of the sprightliness, grace, and loveliness of his letters. There seems a tendency to depreciate Cowper nowadays, and one modern poet has been so wanting in taste and discernment as to say of him that he "creeps upon common

- place." It is an unintelligible criticism, because Cowper did know so supremely well how to write, and to his reader, therefore, is superior to the profoundest philosopher, the most original psychologist, who cannot. As Bagehot says of him: "There is no writer more exclusively English." His, surely, is the easiest, plainest, most *talking* pen of any English author except Bunyan, and directed by a human soul as winning as Lamb's or Goldsmith's. It is partly because he so often writes just for fun. Nature, indeed, was little more to him than a refined and placid recreation, a refuge from what Festus calls "soul-wrack." Who but a churl would not rejoice to play with Cowper?
- 158 82 In *Nature in Downland*, Mr. W. H. Hudson has the following passage: "These [Sussex minor singers] are now forgotten, and their works will never come back; for though important in their own day, they were, viewed at this distance, little people who could have no place with the immortals. But I do not despise them on that account. Being of that tribe myself, I have a kindly feeling for little people, not for the living only, who write in the modern fashion and are by some thought great, but also for those who have been long dead, whose fame has withered and wasted in the grave. And for the last of the few singers I have mentioned I cherish a very special regard, and should not like to tell how the forgotten name of Hurdis came by chance to be associated in my mind with the South Downs." Mr. Hudson then describes how he came upon some extracts from Hurdis in a volume of Shenstone selections in his Argentine home, and how they lived in his memory long after he came to England. "A Bird's Nest" (from the *Village Curate*) is one of the passages he quotes. A long passage in *The Favourite Village* (1800) describes the snaring of wheatears by the shepherds for the Brighton luxury market. If, indeed, a writer of the pigmy stature of Mr. Hudson has "a very special regard" for Parson Hurdis, it behoves us, who, thus graded, can hardly be picked out under the microscope, to keep an eye for the tiny trefoils of the long grass as we go our ways over the great earth. A taste for small things "not quite so fair as many are," for the harvest mice of the literary landscape (*Mus hyblaensis*) is not altogether forbidden to the anthologist. The poetic empyrean may well hold terrors for the homely, and there is a place for the tiny musical boxes in the poets' orchestra. We like their twitterings, and it gives us a shock of pleasure to find a minute head with the swollen cheeks of toothache embossed on the capital of a soaring fluted pillar in the cathedral. There are, indeed, two conditions attached.

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- Beauty must break in somewhere, and our quest for these *animulae* must not be met by false pretences. A hint of swagger, of swollen head rather than cheeks, and down goes every defence of the minor poem. But I cannot think that those plain leaves and grasses I have attempted to mingle occasionally with the flowers in this volume are an offence.
- 159 83 From *The Favourite Village*, Book IV. Practically all the work on this plane of descriptive verse is much of a muchness, but this appears to me a specimen rather superior to its fellows.
- 161 84 Crabbe, called "Pope in worsted stockings," and by Byron "Nature's sternest painter," is at his best as a nature poet in littoral landscape and particularly as the engraver in heroic couplets of Aldeburgh, his birthplace. If God created heaven and earth, he left Aldeburgh to Crabbe, for its grey sea, shingled beach, and flat salt-marches are Crabbe to the life. While White is still the familiar of Selborne, Crabbe to this day attends upon Aldeburgh, and covers it with the mantle of his own seaside pea (*Lathurus maritimus*) which grows there so abundantly and is somehow so characteristic of him.
- 163 85 The biography of the hapless Robert Fergusson (see p. 381), prefixed to the 1807 edition of his work, is dedicated to Grahame. He was first an advocate, but was ordained in 1809 in London. When first married, Grahame discovered that his wife thought but meanly of his poetry, and this, no doubt, was his main reason for publishing *The Sabbath* anonymously in 1804. It charmed him to find Mrs. Grahame in raptures over "the descriptive beauty, the vivid historical illustrations, the moving sentimental pictures, and the deep religious earnestness of a poem that is Scottish to the core; and he then avowed the authorship." In 1808 he issued his poems in two volumes. As poet of the *Sabbath* Grahame was admired by Scott, and Byron sneered at him in *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*. In 1806 he published his *Birds of Scotland* in verse, which has more descriptive ingenuity than ornithological knowledge.
- 164 86 From *The Birds of Scotland* (1806). It is hardly necessary to point out that this piece is chosen as a specimen of very little known and competent descriptive verse, rather than for poetic distinction.
- — (1) Viz. red grouse or "moor fowl."
- — (2) The young are usually from seven to ten, and mottled and streaked (chestnut and buff) would be a more correct description than "spotted."
- (3) The young are chiefly fed on caterpillars, though leaves and ling shoots are also eaten.

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- 166 87 From Northall's *English Folk-Rhymes* (1892). This rhyme is from Gloucestershire. A variant from Nottinghamshire is :
- "Coo-pe-coo,  
Me and my poor two,  
Two sticks across and a little piece of moss,  
And it will do, do, do."
- 167 88 From Swainson's *Provincial Names and Folklore of British Birds*.
- 168 89 From Northall's *English Folk-Rhymes*. The rhyme (which comes from Warwickshire) no doubt owes its origin to the tradition of a drop of blood from the Cross falling on the robin's breast. The tradition of the swallow is that it hovered over the Cross, crying "Svala! Svala!" (Console! Console!); hence it was called Svalow (the bird of consolation): cp. Brewster's *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*.
- 169 90 From Swainson's *Provincial Names and Folklore of British Birds*. This is from Northumberland, and there are variants for Durham, Berkshire, and Lancashire. As these variants predict weal or woe from the numbers seen quite contrarily from one another, I imagine that neither one nor the other was taken too much to heart. But we moderns mostly see one for sorrow all right, though in Pembrokeshire I have seen twenty-three for an unforgotten joy, fluttering like pied butterflies of Brobdingnag about the face of an ancient monolith—an uncurtaining of lost days of plenty.
- 173 91 From *Songs of Innocence* (1789).
- 174 92 From the Rossetti MSS. (1793-1811).
- 175 93 From *Poetical Sketches* (1783).
- 176 94 From *Milton* (1804). Blake is nature imparadised, and he lived in it all his life. His poetry can scarcely be criticised; it must be loved or feared, as we accept or shun the first principles of things. It is bedrock, the flaming heart of life, and his use of gold both in his art and his poems, the colour of fire, of the sun of delight, is second nature to him. It is extraordinary that Lamb, Wordsworth, and other of the Romantic poets who read him, never seemed to have an inkling that the entire philosophy and revolution of thought they helped to embody are all in Blake, carried much farther and to the *n*th degree.
- 180 96 We are sensible in this poem of a relief at meeting no references whatever to "oary" feet, Leda and "the sad dirge of her certain ending," thus silencing us from grumbling over the "milky nest" and the "diamond water

- drops " gathered from the surface of the lake. We have a right to expect of Keats, whose spirit swayed so responsively to the rhythms of external nature that he (see the Letters) entered into the life of the sparrow pecking from the gravel, not to be above a little homely observation. Seldom has the swan had such good luck. Even from the nineteenth century to the present day, a bird known as the mute swan and as a large domesticated species hardly difficult to see, has been sung as a singer, and the series is beautifully rounded off by Mrs. Hemans's account of how she stood up to the waist in reeds, eagerly hearkening to a solitary swan " warbling his death-chant." The poet replies that imagination is supreme over the noting of mere phenomena. In plainer words, the seedy clout of fabular tradition is a good enough substitute for " the living garment " of natural truth.
- 181 97 From *Hyperion*, Book II. Keats does not exactly say that the battle is to the beautiful rather than to the strong, or that the survival of the fittest is another term for the triumph of beauty. Yet it largely is so in bald science, and the spectacle of the natural world is rather that of the strength of beauty than the beauty of strength. The fitnesses and the adaptations of living creatures are their harmonies on the æsthetic plane. As Meredith said, " ugliness is half-way to a thing," and the ugly, the inharmonious, the unworkmanlike, the unadaptable have been weeded out in the struggle for existence. What to Huxley was a gladiatorial show, with the best butcher reaping the prize of life, has been in plainest truth a lists with beauty for the champion. Only the ugly parasite survives in degeneracy, and nature is but for this all beauty because it is all fitness. From one point of view evolution means nothing less than the unfolding of beauty.
- 182 98 From *Miscellaneous Poems*.
- 183 99 From *Lines Written among the Euganean Hills* (1819). No poet has ever written about rooks as Shelley has. Imagination here has no quarrel with reality, and Shelley makes us feel that nature can never be understood or described or felt or revealed except through the poetry of verse or prose. The scientific method is simply devilling for the poet, nature's only true interpreter.
- 184 100 From Act 2, Scene 2 (1820).
- 185 101 From *Poems Written in 1818*, published in two parts, the first posthumously by Mrs. Shelley in 1824.
- — (1) Compare with Milton's " Silence was pleased " and Drummond's " Night attends, become all ear."
- 188 102 From *Epipsyichidion*. The captive bird, of course, is Emilia Viviani. Too many of the poets anthropomorphise their birds; Shelley, here, aviomorphises Emilia.

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189 103

The concluding stanzas of *Charles the First*. The preceding stanza, sung by Archy, the Court Fool, runs :

“ Heigho ! the lark and the owl  
 One flies the morning, and one lulls the night :—  
 Only the nightingale, poor, fond soul,  
 Sings like the fool through darkness' and light.”

Then follow the two stanzas above in inverted commas.

190 104

Composed at Leghorn, 1820, and published with *Prometheus Unbound* in the same year. It is strange that this poem maintains so bright a fame. The silver cord of the lyric is loosened and the golden bowl is broken ; the cluster of meteorites bursts and the fragments blaze off into the vast and are lost. The poem only stays alive, in fact, by the matchless beauty of detached stanzas, which might be hitched on to any other poetic wagon, trundling after its star.

194 105

From *Prometheus*, Act 3, Scene 4—“ The Spirit of the Earth.” The preceding line begins: “All things had put their evil nature off,” and no kingfisher could presume upon its possessing an unequal share of the brightness of the visible world to continue a stubborn fisherman. When Prometheus is unbound, the swallow must chase the thistledown not the gnat, and Jove's eagle scoop out the bulb with talons and hooked bill. The American Belted Kingfisher (*Ceryle Alcyon*) does very occasionally vary its diet by feeding upon berries.

195 106

From *Poems Written in 1821*. The poem has a quaint and whimsical air, very unlike Shelley. I have omitted the passage in *The Revolt of Islam* about the fight between the eagle and the serpent, as being a *tour de force*, an exercise of opulent diction rather than a flight of imagination or an emotional record of experience.

196 107

From *Zapolya : A Christmas Tale* (1817). The loveliest song in the language, we say. But so many are !

197 108

From *Sibylline Leaves*, first printed in *Lyrical Ballads*, 1798. Apart from its excellencies, plainly unequal and mingled with rather prosy solemnities, this poem is interesting for its right thinking and rebuke to the purely literary poet for exploiting birds to make copy and depending on classical tradition to the perversion of life and reality. Even Coleridge, however, who so enriched our poetry by his acutely sensitive perceptions of natural truth, commits himself to the nightingale's “jug, jug,” an utterance of the fabular bird and a libel on the real. Only woodlark and nightingale have a *crescendo*.

201 109

The problem of operating on the most wonderful lyrical-narrative poem ever written has been a delicate one. To

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have carved away the few stanzas strictly relating to the albatross would have been to make a fool both of the bird and the poem. At first, then, I thought that, though a great many poems can be as readily partitioned as Ulster, and it is impossible to compile an anthology without surgery, *The Ancient Mariner* had neither a Tyrone nor a Fermanagh. Later reflection, however, led me to think that portions of the sixth part (verses 92-97 and 107-109) and of the seventh (verses 118-132 and 135-138), describing the spirit voices and the return to the harbour, could be omitted without any serious hurt to the unity of the poem, while at the same time concentrating its general "birdiness," so to speak. For *The Ancient Mariner* is, of course, a bird-poem even as an intact whole. It is interesting to note that the landscape painting of *The Ancient Mariner* is as deliberately precise, as scrupulously defined as a seedsman's catalogue, and a poem more richly dyed in magic than any other in the language responds as promptly as a reflex action to Blake's "To generalise is to be an idiot. To particularise is the great distinction of merit," and Keats's "Distinctness is the poet's luxury."

The triumph of *The Ancient Mariner* is that it is as true as the needle to the magnetic pole to three worlds all at once and in perfect harmony—the spiritual world, the supernatural world, and the real world. It is the minute and delicate actuality of the landscape-painting both in *The Ancient Mariner* and *Christabel* which gives such force and animation to the supernatural element in them. Spenser made his own the truth of fairyland; Coleridge his the fairyland of truth.

- 209 109 (1) A queer error for Coleridge's sharpness of perception and power of definition. For, of course, the star would be hidden by the moon's shadow.
- — (2) *Coleridge's Note*.—"For the two last lines of this stanza I am indebted to Mr. Wordsworth. It was on a delightful walk from Nether Stowey to Dulverton, with him and his sister, in the autumn of 1797, that this poem was planned, and in part composed."
- 222 111 (1) This is a poem beyond criticism, but one may venture to be surprised at Wordsworth's choice of the greenfinch as a presence of self-sufficient enjoyment, since the bird is sociable throughout the year, even nesting in small colonies. No doubt Wordsworth actually saw a solitary greenfinch, as one rarely does, and so was justified in making it a symbol of solitude.
- 224 112 It may be vandalism to remark it, but the cuckoo is in the worst possible moral odour since the publication of Mr. Edgar Chance's *The Cuckoo's Secret* (1922). But

- great minds bother little about a sense of duty to others, and the cuckoo at least is a masterpiece of business foresight.
- 226 113 If there is a greater, there is also a lesser spotted woodpecker, who is little known, but very agreeable on acquaintance.
- 227 114 The nest, as Wordsworth himself states, was on the largest island of Rydal Water.
- 228 115 (1) This wonderful line seems to me to contain the whole truth about nature-poetry, and to express in nine words what I have been unable to do in more than 900 (see Introduction).
- 229 116 This sonnet is to my mind a bird-poem. I've known it by heart since childhood, and am still strangely moved by it. Who can recall the tentative, half-toned meditation of the robin's autumn song without feeling that it is indeed adapted to the repose and evening of the year?
- 230 117 From *The Excursion*. Was there ever a harder poet to anthologise than Wordsworth? You have to get the poet out of the President of the Board of Poetry; and when he commits a phrase like "With grace of motion that might scarcely seem Inferior to the angelical," you marvel that he ever wrote anything but business letters as Hon. Secretary of the Westmorland Board of Guardians ("With reference to your communication of the 10th ultimo . . .") in his life. Except for the absence of the heroic couplet, it is impossible to distinguish some few of these lines from the average pastoral verse of the eighteenth century. And Wordsworth is sometimes infected with the vices of the fashion he helped to destroy.
- 231 118 (1) The poet really means the ring-dove, who has learned a more mellifluous accent than the Yorkshire one of the stock-dove. Granted that, how true to the spirit of these birds—and to Wordsworth's own—the poem is! The nightingale's is a burning love-song, passionate and wild as the heart of Orpheus, with a *crescendo* like the pale form of Eurydice rising from the dead—not lachrymose as other poets say, and certainly not Wordsworthian.
- 232 119 This fine sonnet is little known. There are a number of other bird-poems in Wordsworth, but they are spoiled by the curious blend of prattle and solemn invocation which occurs in so much of his inferior work. I hesitated over and finally rejected *At the Corner of Wood Street . . .* as unworthy its reputation.
- 233 120 From *Poetical Works*. A good, plain narrative which has all the feel of a true story.
- 234 121 Inscribed on an urn in the flower-garden at Hafod. Rogers's

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*Poetical Works* were published complete in 1875, with a memoir by Edward Bell.

- 234 121 (1) What is it that gives man his true supremacy in the world of earthly being—his arts, his inventions, his devastating force, his mind, his social heritage? Nature, whether consciously or not, supplies her parallels to and sources of them. Perhaps it is through the imaginative kingdom revealed in this simple line. Man is great, he is glorious, because he alone can become all other beings and feel with them their loves, their hopes, their fears.
- 235 122 It is a nice problem whether to pass *The Raven* as a bird-poem. If Poe's bird is a spectral, at least he is an atmospheric raven, and of all the feathered tribes, his sable dye is the richest soaked in sombre human legend, tragedy, and association. The raven is to the Northern races what the dove is to the Scriptures. He is "old, old, very old," and haunts the Gothic fanes both of nature and the imagination with so hieratic a presence and casting so dark a spell that he seems to turn the primeval rocks of his home into the symbolled shapes of uncreate night and to wave his wings between the soaring bluffs of a supernatural architecture. Thus Poe's Raven is the familiar of the raven of earth, down to the very beat of the deep vowel-sounds, echoing the rumble of his croak. Mr. Clutton Brock calls *The Raven* "a tawdry thing," and describes the intellectual force in it as applied "to the problem of vulgar effects as if it had a task worthy of itself." I think he is right: *The Raven* is a kind of mixture of Grand Guignol and pantomime. But the raven is not only a sombre and majestic figure in legend and tradition; there is a grotesque, even clownish element, too, and the poem does gather up the remnants of a decaying legend.
- 241 123 From *Nepenthe*, 2nd Canto, a fragment privately printed in 1839, and now *rarissime*. The very little attention it attracted was largely hostile. Miss Mitford, however, who talked about the poet in her *Recollections*, said of it: "There is an intoxication about it that turns the brain. Such a poet could never have been popular. But he was a poet." But she never got through it, and Mr. Ingram, who edited *Sylvia*, calls it just bizarre. Mr. R. A. Streatfield, who reviewed *Nepenthe* in 1897, holds that it is "more conspicuous for sustained imaginative power and magnificent sonority of diction than any like poem between the death of Byron and the rising star of Tennyson." *Nepenthe* seems to owe much both to Shelley and Keats, and is perhaps the finest of all Darley's works. But it is fantasy, profuse in music and colour, uncertain on the wing, which visits imagination's kingdom only as a

- bird of passage. I know of no other passage in our literature which sings the hoopoe, enshrined in Arabic legend. The ravens fed Elijah; robin and wren are "God Almighty's cock and hen"; the eagle is the bird of Jove, who also had a use for swans; a divinity hedged the Egyptian ibis, and the hoopoes protected the Prophet from the midday sun.
- 242 124 From *Sylvia* (1827). The poet is of course entitled to his phoenix, so long as he does not confuse it with jackdaws. Darley was a born phoenix-fancier—"And from these create he can Shapes more real . . ." If the phoenix was hatched from the poet's flaming breast, it is his nursling of immortality, and what was Darley's truth must go into our living museum of rainbow wings. Where there is no contact with reality, there can be no conflict with it.
- 245 125 From *Death's Jest Book* (1850). Beddoes's Crow has a rarer and truer grisliness by far than Poe's Raven. The crow, a model of conjugal fidelity to the uxorious margin, a pioneer with the rest of his tribe in the science of social co-operation, the most intellectually advanced of any other winged being short of the angels, and gifted with a rich, if boisterous, sense of humour, is the Satan among birds alike to poets, gamekeepers, and members of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.
- 246 126 From *Poetical Works*, Brisbane, 1887; reprinted in *The Great Kinship*. Except in the 14th line, I think the poem manages to shoot the sentimental rapids, though not, perhaps, with much to spare. Certainly I prefer a bird-poem of this homespun to all the sham glitter of Meredith's and Swinburne's. Nature is too wise and merciful to endow her wilder children with tenacious memories. Adams, the poet of "Songs of the Army of the Night" (1888), "Tiberius" (1894), and other poems and novels, had a noble spirit and genuine poetic power. But like many another fine spirit he was embittered and spoiled by hard circumstance and, in a way, by the very fire of his heart.
- By an error, the poem was placed a little too early in the book.
- 248 128 (1) Bumbarrels = Long-tailed Tits.
- 249 129 From *Asylum Poems*.
- 250 130 A good example of Clare's power of intimate observation.
- 253 132 This beautiful poem, among Clare's earliest, and discovered by Mr. Blunden—who might almost be said to have rewritten Clare, so completely has he restored him to our generation—achieves a unity of form and finality of detached vision rare with him. Clare abandons himself so utterly to nature that he becomes like nature or nature's

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spirit, as no other "nature-poet" does. He does not, for instance, anthropomorphise natural sights and sounds, as they so often do, but, hardly consciously, talks on in nature's own tones, his verse travelling on like a process or movement of her own. It is this faculty of a budding, leafing, and warbling verse which rouses the criticism that Clare did not know when and how to come to an *artistic* end, as Gray did not know how to "speak out." He simply went on as nature goes on, until we think of his song (as we do not of other singers, greater or less than he and to whom we apply different standards) as—

"A noise like of a hidden brook,  
In the leafy month of June,  
That to the sleeping woods all night  
Singeth a quiet tune."

But *Song's Eternity* is different, and catches into a fixed and eternal form the everlastingness and continuity of nature—of which, elsewhere, Clare is, as Vaughan says, a natural "bright shoot."

- 255 134 (1) The usual number of the eggs of the quail (a very irregular visitor and less abundant than it used to be) is from seven to ten. Fifteen was a very abnormal clutch. The cry *whit, whit, whit* is the origin of the name "wet my foot" or "wet my lips." The bird winters in Southern Europe and Northern and Tropical Africa.
- 256 135 (1) Eggs are laid late in April. But the buntings are also the latest among the finches to breed, sometimes having second or third clutches as late as August.
- 257 136 From Arthur Symonds's *Poems by John Clare*. The previous ones are from Edmund Blunden's and Alan Porter's *John Clare's Poems: Chiefly from Manuscript* (1921), the standard selected edition.
- 258 — (1) Lesser Redpolls.
- — (2) Probably the Cole-tit.
- 259 137 From *The Life and Remains of John Clare*, by J. L. Cherry (1873). The text is abominably corrupt, and I am indebted to Mr. Edmund Blunden for the correct MS. reading.
- 261 138 From a MS. poem lent me by Mr. Blunden, an obvious imitation of Burns.
- — Clare is the only strictly nature-poet we or other nations possess. His men, women, and children are part of the landscape—they grow like flowers—and are not, as they are in Wordsworth, Shelley, Coleridge, Byron, and Keats, moralised and symbolised beings in a purposed relationship with the universe. He resembles Bloomfield and his type only in that neither of them were "peasant poets." Bloomfield is a towny poetaster, writing about nature as

from a countrified coffee-house. Clare's voice is the whistling of leaves, the piping of bullfinches, the rustling of streams, the droning of bees, because, mysteriously, he is what they are in another medium or had a spirit so transparent that they and all natural things filtered through it. A portion of his expression is almost nothing more than rhymed natural history, a literal picking of nature's pocket without, so to speak, reinvesting the gains in the poetic funds. But the "almost" makes all the difference. Clare, whether wandering in fancy or rarefied fact, is fastidiously concrete and precise, never the eloquent professionalist, exploiting the object to the phrase. The ordinary, the plain-speaking way of Clare, so instinctively true to its object, gives even his flattest diarising a unique personal and emotional quality. He sees rather than describes nature, and even memory works through the imagination. In a way peculiarly his own, he accommodated truth to nature with truth to poetry. His best poems are neither pure data nor pure imagination, but an individual blend of both which does express the music of his own soul and the "inward stir of shadowed melody" in nature in one.

Clare's was a native genius in the closest touch with the soil; he inherited a racial tradition in pastoral poetry and approached his theme with no philosophy or set aims. But over and beyond this is the power of his own spiritual nature to identify itself with the dumb thought, the inner life of nature, not as a visionary, but simply as a lover. Except at the end and in moments of chance musing, his most winning of spirits did not feel the profound nostalgia of other poets, content only with a seventh heaven reconciling the ultimate end of human thought and feeling with the principles of all things. Nevertheless, the final value of Clare is that he does not imitate, but creates his own world in the manner and within the freedom of nature. It is thus he pours out his unpremeditated love—the most telling example in literature of the truth that the gift of the spirit is not inconsistent with a knowledge of its material works.

- 262 139 From *Poetical Works*. Some stanzas omitted. I have a weakness for this diverting poem, which aims at a kind of picaresque horror and achieves only a boisterous but shrewd joviality—which is exactly the personality of *Corvus corone*.
- 265 141 From *Misconceptions*. I have left out "O, to be in England . . ." (not unwillingly), as not being primarily a bird-poem.
- 266 142 From *Fables in Song* (1874). Goose-stepping, rhetorical stuff, like much of loquacious Lytton's work, but rather

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- impressive as a storm of energy. I tramped fourteen volumes to fetch this out, and I am not quite sure whether my ambition or his merit finally won the fatiguing day.
- 267 143 (1) There is an old wassail song sung on New Year's Eve which has :
- " Little maid, little maid, troll the pin,  
Open the door and we'll all roll in."
- 268 144 From *Balder*. (1) "Marinere" is—like the West COUNTRY—suspect. And what is a "sea-mew"? When the nymph in the grove evolved into the girl in the wood, poetry no less than reality was the better for it. No sea-mew ever winged its way farther than the page; no mavis ever sang except upon the Igrasil tree whose leaves are made of paper. But in spite of this, and though the swallow knoweth its appointed course, carries the sign-posts in its head and even has in subconscious memory its last year's clayey home, there is a real parallel between its trackless wandering and the restlessness of the human heart.
- 269 145 Published in 1821 with *The Ages, Thanatopsis, Green River*, and other pieces. One of the most genuine of bird-poems ever written, and justest of analogies between human and bird life.
- 271 146 From *Art* (1865). It is a queer and moving experience to find Thomson easing his heart of doom and all its smart in the series of beguiling poems (of which this is one) about the Thames and his love and Hampstead Heath, following the terrors of unlifting night.
- 274 148 Several stanzas omitted.
- — (1) A good echo of Swinburne.
- 276 149 Viz.: After the treaty between the birds and Maresnest and Windbag, who sailed to the Bird-Paradise beyond the Pole on an iceberg, to entreat the birds to repopulate the earth, devoured by insects.
- All from *The Paradise of Birds* (1889). The poem was written when the Professor of Poetry was a young man. There are extracts from it in *Love's Meinie*, Ruskin's sad assay in ornithology, and Mr. W. H. Hudson writes of it as "the finest poem in this [nineteenth] century, perhaps in any century since man invented the art of imparting lessons of wisdom by fable and allegory." But the wish here is not only father to the thought, but keeps it on a starvation allowance. Courthope was only a copper Aristophanes, the Squire Waterton of rhyme, and the poem excels in fantasticalness, invention, humanity of feeling, gusto, and the ingenious deployment of prejudice rather than in power, wit, or beauty. But it is extremely jovial and

- racy; its pedantry has all the flavour of robustious scholarship (a tradition now lost), and with an educated people it would long ago have made a famous pantomime with a serious moral.
- 278 150 From *Lyric Poems*. The answer to these questions is, as the Parliament men say, in the negative. The nightingale declares positively that he has never heard of Tereus, that Philomela is no relation at all of his, and that, with such unfortunate associations connected with the name, he is very glad of it. His reply, bourgeois as it sounds, is fair literary criticism.
- 280 151 From *Thyrsis*. Clough died at Florence in 1861. Arnold, no doubt, thought that the cuckoo migrated in June because "in June, He changes his tune" (see p. 116), a change also heard in the promiscuity of courtship. Actually, the old birds do not go until August, and the young remain in England up to the end of September. The extract is a curious example of a poet's elaboration of a beautiful concept not out of truth or imagination or fancy, but out of a pure error of observation. The charges of copyright have prevented me from including an extract from *Poor Matthias*, which exhibits a reaction against the excessive anthropomorphism towards nature, not only of some poets, but Arnold himself.
- 281 152 From *Flower Pieces and Day and Night Songs* (1854).
- 283 153 Idem.
- 284 154 From *Collected Sonnets* (1868).
- 285 155 Idem. These two poems are inserted rather as characteristic examples of the attitude of the mid-Victorian mind to nature, than for conspicuous intrinsic merit. Not that they are without grace of feeling and language, in spite of the woolliness of both in certain lines. *On Startling Some Pigeons* is, indeed, so mixed with both, what with the laborious padding of the middle and the dignity of the close, that I hesitated for a week before including it. Its tenderness won the day. Tennyson Turner has written several other poems about birds—of right feeling, fair observation, and with occasional felicities of phrase, but very second-rate and sticky with sentiment. Put your Sandford and Merton in your pocket, come forth and muse upon the sweet creatures who inhabit God's good earth—is the air of them.
- 286 156 I am no lover of Rossetti, but this poem is swept by an obscure, tumultuous beauty, a disciplined wildness which moves the soul. In some nature-poems we are repelled by what seems to us a wrong way of commingling human emotions with the life of nature. It is not the fact of the association which hinders our full acquiescence in them—if nature is not seen with emotion as well as truth, it is

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not seen at all. We feel, in Blake's phrase, that they are bending nature to themselves. Here it is different; the poet has chosen one of the many true and just ways of drawing human symbols, parallels, and analogies from nature.

289 158 Both from *Miscellaneous Poems*. For a detailed criticism of the common view that Tennyson was a naturalist, see Professor Miall's *Round the Year*. The other bird-poems of Tennyson did not seem to me quite good enough for inclusion.

290 159 From *Sea-Drift (Leaves of Grass)*. If Keats's Ode is the most perfect poem here collected and Mr. Stephens's (see p. 326) *The Song* translates the abandon of bird-flight and song in terms of the human soul's exultation and desire more triumphantly than its brother-poems, the tragic grandeur of Whitman's poem seems to echo all human sorrow, loss, and pathos in the dirge of the widowed bird as no other poet has done. Yet the bird never becomes a mere symbol; its voice is dignified and made sublime in the light of intense experience, so intense that to read its lament aloud is to taste the ache and pity of things to their depths. The very brokenness of the lines represents a breaking heart made visible.

The late John Burroughs published a volume in 1884 called *Birds and Poets with other Papers*, in which he quotes many bird-poems of a truly remarkable badness. But in it there is a very interesting paper on Whitman, in which he points out that the towering force of his personality was alone fitted in modern verse to assimilate and interpret the majesty and hope of the new, creative gospel of evolution. Professor Clifford calls him the poet of "cosmic emotion" and he truly absorbs the vast travail of life, stirred, quickened, transfigured from the prostrate dust. "Rise after rise bow the phantoms behind me." The sciences have dwindled man and Whitman exalts him, but rather as the prophet of his future harmony and the priest who can alone read the mysteries in the huge material processes of the ascending spirit.

298 160 From *Sea-Drift*.

299 161 From the "By the Roadside" section of *Leaves of Grass*. No doubt, a personal experience for which all naturalists would give their ears.

300 162 From *Twilight Calm*. Compare with Coleridge's *The Nightingale* (p. 197). It is interesting that this subtle and varied melodist, whose music sways and flows and glances like flames, waxing and waning in an uncertain wind, should have been the only modern poet to have rediscovered, however partially, the secret of the seventeenth-century lyric cadence.

- But here is "her" again. The lark, as well as the nightingale, is a frequent victim of this unbalanced feminism. One of the poems of F. W. Bourdillon goes out of its way to make the sky-lark the she-lark, when even the rhyme does not call upon it to stretch a point in favour of the fair. I am reminded of a passage in Stopford Brooke's study of Blake: "As to the songs themselves, they are as gay, as sweet, as musical, and as tender as the song of a mother-bird over her nestlings when the sunny wind is playing in the tree." Poor Blake! Meeting these stock-in-trade howlers again and again in certain poems compels one to ask the question: Are birds, the most poetic of all the volumes in nature's vast literature, nothing but a kind of furniture to some poets—the high-priests of nature, the readers of her soul and interpreters of her beauty?
- 301 163 From *Poems*, 1893. A third of them were printed in 1859. To make this mid-Victorian poem a person, it must be Arabella Allen.
- — (1) The nightingale does not, of course, sing in its winter-quarters.
- — (2) "Lissom" to the Victorians was what enamelled pastures were to the Elizabethans, groves to the Georgians, onyx and chrysoprase to the nineties, and what painted apes and gingerbeer bottles are to the more advanced moderns.
- 303 164 From *Minuscula* (1897), siftings of volumes published anonymously at Oxford in 1891, 1892, and 1894, with the addition of a few from *Ailes d'Alouette*.
- 304 165 From *Ailes d'Alouette*.
- 305 166 Mr. Hardy, in the Preface to his own selection of Barnes (Frowde, 1908), calls attention to this most lovable poet's subtle and fastidious craftsmanship. He belongs, he says, to the literary school of Tennyson, Gray, and Collins, rather than to that of the unpremeditated dialect singer. "Primarily spontaneous, he was academic closely after; and we find him warbling his native wood-notes with a watchful eye on the predetermined score, a far remove from the popular impression of him as the naïf and rude bard who sings only because he must." He says, in fact, that he was only saved from a kind of slavery to form by "the conditions of his scene, vocabulary, and character." We find the same strange but happy compound in his way of looking at the life and landscape of nature. No country minstrel rune would speak of the blackbird's "sweetest ditties" as in this lovely song.
- — (1) May.
- — (2) Brushwood or branches.
- — (3) Plashed
- — (4) Noon or afternoon meal.

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- 306 167 From *Songs of Seven*. The last stanza but one of *Honours*. A long poem in sense. The littlest thing true to itself and to the law of its own substance is greater than Truth, false, by the smallest deviation, to itself. As Lecky used to say, a nation which falls below the ethical standards of its own time is more immoral than one of a lower status which keeps pace with those of its own time, though absolutely the action of the latter is morally much worse than that of the former.
- 307 168 From *Songs of Seven*.
- 311 172 Strictly no bird-poem; but who could play the school-master and expel this lovely changeling, singing the epithalamion of science and religion?
- 313 174 It is wonderful to see how Tabb contrives to catch the mysteries of life and the exaltation of the soul with his little decoys of epigram and paradox and the imagery of the familiar and the particular, for at times the melodies shaken out of these tiny musical-boxes are sublime. So, in the reverse way, he surrounds a floweret, a lamb, a fledgling with thunders, bodying forth great things by small, and small things by great. He rimes the commonest things with a magic veil and clothes the most majestic in homely weeds; and of some of his snowflake poems, his filigree petals, we may well ask:

" Who hammered you, wrought you  
From argentine vapour? "

The poems here are taken from Mrs. Meynell's edition of *Poems and Later Poems*.

- 314 175 From *Miscellaneous Poems*. To Thompson, moving with precipitant vision in the celestial vasts, as one at home there, small, fragile, intimate things were revealed with a new poignancy, and the mood of this poem is not rare with him.
- 316 176 From posthumous papers and fragments. "Sheath" in l. 27 has been altered by the Poet Laureate for the "sheaf" of the MS. There are two other bird-poems in the author's *Poems* (edited by the Poet Laureate), and of *The Windhover* (kestrel) the author wrote: "that is the best thing I ever wrote." But the second stanza is all dark with that affected obscurity and harshly elaborated word-mannerisms which have shut a powerful and visionary mind off from many readers. Hopkins was conscious of the oddities resulting from the pattern-making he called "inscape," but less so of the perversities due to a robustness of personality misapplied. His own preface to his *Poems* should be studied for an understanding of their peculiar methods of prosody and punctuation. *The Woodlark* is so original and so utterly different from any

- other bird-poem in this book, that it is a joy to be able to include it. After reading it many times and having recently heard the woodlark (a very local bird) sing once more, I think it catches the way and feeling of the bird marvellously. In fact, Hopkins taught him his song.
- 318 177 From the *Bridge of Five*. There is an earlier and different version, Flecker's often over-deliberate craftsmanship never being content except to leave "a metal grace, a graven joy," upon his work:

"Once a poor song-bird that had lost her way  
Sang down in hell upon a blackened bough,  
Till all the lazy ghosts remembered how  
The forest trees stood up against the day.

"Then suddenly they knew that they had died,  
Hearing this music mock their shadow-land;  
And some one there stole forth a timid hand  
To draw a phantom brother to his side.

- The pressing together of the poem by two syllables in every line has squeezed out the superfluities and generalities. It is thrilling to spy on the poet in his workshop and see the shavings fly.
- 321 178 From *Moments of Vision* (1917). Mr. Hardy is still almost alone among modern poets to recognise humanity to animals as based equally upon reason as feeling, as, that is to say, a logical consequence of Darwinism. His poems reveal a tragic view of human evolution, and a great one of human sympathies.
- 324 180 From *Moments of Vision*. The previous poem is from *Poems of the Past and Present*, and is dated 1900. *The Robin* is one of the happiest, most bird-like poems in this volume, and the use of the run-on line is noteworthy, for if there is a technique a bird can teach a poet, it lies in this. It was the eighteenth century which fixed the doctrine of the comma, semicolon, or full stop at the end of the line like the pedagogue at the tail of a crocodile of small boys, and the method was a protest and reaction against the excessive serpentine of the heroic couplet in the long heroic-pastorals of the preceding century. Dryden and his heirs appeared to consider the use of it as an outrageous innovation, a heresy against the true faith of prosody, whereas the "father of English poetry" made a copious and intricate use of the run-on line. Of modern poets, Mr. Hodgson (who makes a technical triumph of it), Mr. de la Mare, and Mr. W. H. Davies in *Day's Black Star*, use it to the will and direction of the poetic purpose with great effect.

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325 181

From *The Hill of Vision*. Four stanzas, not essential to the theme, movement, or character of this most radiant poem, omitted. It has not, I believe, been ever reprinted, but it is, to my mind, nearly the best in this collection, the best *bird-poem*. For it is the truth about birds, the naked and the symbolic truth, the truth of what they are, in semi-conscious joy, to themselves, the truth of their being to the earth from whose bosom they flew, and the truth of their revelation to the soul of man. We are free, in fact, of the disharmony between the naturalist and the poet of which we are conscious in some of the poems of this volume. We seem here, even if partially, to penetrate the mystery of the bird, its "cause of causes, end of ends," which it is hard for us to read, because the bird's evolution has been divergent from our own, and our common ancestors are far, far beyond the horizon of the past, among the reptiles of the Mesozoic ages. We can understand how birds have a subjective appeal for us when we view them as concrete projections of the invisible, inarticulate waves of longing beating up from the human soul. Watching them with the intense concentration of the outward and the inward eye adjusted to each other, we see at last—ourselves, escaped from the accidents of sense by which we guide our lives and falling into the surge of a music whose singers and players are the whole of creation. What we need, whether we call ourselves naturalists or nature-poets—and neither is truly himself without something of the other—is not to humanise the birds, but to wing our humanity in their pursuit—in the due proportions of truth and imagination. This lovely poem has accomplished it.

335 182 From *The Adventures of Seumas Beg*. The freshness, spontaneity, and whole-hearted abandon of this gem is achieved by studied and elaborate devices and patterns of musical and metrical effect. It is true to the gladness of Nature's infant morning, because it is truer still to the craft and nature of lyrical form and expression. Copyright has lost me *The Tree of the Bird* from *The Hill of Vision* and *The Rivals* from *Songs from the Clay*.

337 183 From *The Last Blackbird* (1907).

338 — (1) An odd banality. Mr. Hodgson's technique never lets him down thus in his second period—that of *Poems* (1917).

340 184 From *Poems* (1917). Compare with the closing lines of *The Song of Honour*.

341 185 *Hymn to Moloch*. If the objection to printing this spicy poem is that it is a propagandist tract, the same criticism applies to *The Ancient Mariner*. If humanitarianism could shed its name and be recognised for what it is—a great and integral branch of modern humanism—we

should hear less of the narrow view that the vision of natural beauty unviolated is not the business of the creators of poetic beauty, *always provided* that such feeling is absorbed into the *poetic* values and their expression. The *Hymn to Moloch* has a bibliographical interest. It was written in 1921, to assist the Plumage Bill Group in its campaign against the traffic in birds for millinery, and was given to Mr. Holbrook Jackson, a vice-president of the Group, who was associated with Mr. Hodgson as the publicist in the enterprise of the "Flying Fame" chapbooks in 1912 and who privately printed the poem in a beautiful little paper edition, limited to fifty copies. It was the first poem with which Mr. Hodgson broke a silence of six years.

343 186

From *The Song of Honour*, Flying Fame Broad-sides (1913). It is a great pity that the charges made for copyright have prevented me from using *The Sedge Warbler* and *The Great Auk's Death* from *The Last Blackbird* (1907). But *The Missel Thrush* from this volume and *Stupidity Street*—as good science as it is poetry—and an extract from *The Song of Honour* from *Poems* (1917) are enough for my purpose. Set side by side, they show a remarkable leap or flight forward in technical mastery between the two groups. The earlier poems are uncertain in handling and somewhat rough and harsh in expression; the latter are of the soul of melody, with a corresponding gain in the power manifest in the former. The use of the run-on line, for instance, is rare in *The Last Blackbird*; in *Poems* it is a characteristic device and gives so fluid, rapid, and sinuous a pace to the lyrical movement, to such an effect of light and beauty, that it is a wonder the example has not been more generally followed. Of the elvish, frail loveliness of *Eve* there is no sign in the earlier volume, nor of any evolution up to the mighty vision of *The Song of Honour* have we any but ancestral gleams. Tokens of growth between the two groups are absent. One might almost say that the real link between them (apart from the imprint of an obviously magnetic and fiery personality) is the feeling for birds. Except Mr. Stephens, Mr. Hardy, and Mr. Davies, no other modern poet comes near it. Not libraries of expert ornithology can give you the stamp and cut and rig of a particular bird, as Mr. Hodgson can in a line or two. He is beautifully at home with it. I remember once walking with him over sand-dunes in Cornwall with oyster-catchers on the strand below us. They were like "notes of music," and that was the first and last word to be said about oyster-catchers on the "ribbed sea-sand." So in the more intimate appreciation of bird-biography.

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This is not irrelevant comment. Mr. Hodgson is that rarest, though proper and natural, compound, a poet-naturalist. His earlier poems show him recording and interpreting the life of the bird; in his later, like Mr. De la Mare in *The Linnet*, Mr. Stephens in *Fifteen Acres*, and Coleridge in the song from *Zapolya*, he absorbs the melody of birds into his own poetic medium. Mr. De la Mare has learned the language intuitively, like the polyglot princesses of old; he is not a naturalist, as, in my opinion, it would do no harm for all modern poets who write about nature to be in some measure. But Mr. Hodgson has learned his through natural history working in accord with the divine gift.

345 187

From *Songs of the Fields* (1915). Ledwidge was an Irish peasant poet. Killed in action July 31, 1917. This poem, therefore, and the two following, should strictly go into the previous group. Their moral place, however, clearly belongs here, and here I have put them. Lord Dunsany called him "the poet of the blackbird." "With Homer it was the heroes, with Ledwidge it is the small birds that sing, but in particular especially the blackbird, whose cause he champions against all other birds." Ledwidge, of course, is a secondary poet, and belongs to the "geographical" (to quote Lord Dunsany) type, which selects, reveals, and transforms the beauty of the material world. There are many such Mercators among the poets, but it is surprising how little many of them know their way about it. Ledwidge is not one of these. We trust Ledwidge's familiarity with the earth and that he is poetically competent to give us the assurance, however, conveyed, that he knows the difference between a hawk and a handsaw. Consideration of copyright has compelled me to omit several other bird-poems of tender and intimate grace from Ledwidge's work.

346 188

From *Last Songs*, Londonderry, September 20, 1916.

347 189

From *Magpies in Picardy*. Cameron Wilson was a captain, Sherwood Foresters; killed in action March 23, 1918. In a poem written in his memory by his widow (published in the *Spectator*) occurs the line: "He drew his knowledge from the wild birds' songs." Here is a little-known poet who knows his birds. The shedding of the old poetic prejudice against the magpie reveals a broader evolution of natural knowledge and sympathies.

349 190

This poem has not been previously published, and was specially written for the present volume. That is a high favour, apart from the fact that it is Mr. Blunden's only bird-poem [*The Silver Bird of Herndyke Mill* is on a

## NOTES

different plane—and fishes are more in his line ] and the presence of lines of classic beauty like—

“ Till the sun  
Is the bright hymn of nations of the air  
And evening and the dream-like owl are one.”

For his work is an inheritance from the English pastoral tradition, a true type of continuity and of the persistence of the past into the present. Just as our character is an epitome of our whole history, individual and racial, and yet is something special to itself, just as a living creature is a register of ancestral experience and yet is always creating something new from the raw material of its heritage, so Mr. Blunden's poems introduce a new freshness and reality into our pastoral poetry, while gathering up the old substance. Nor is Mr. Blunden's truth to nature in any way opposed to his truth to poetry. He does not sacrifice imagination to observation, describing to seeing, reproducing to translating and selecting, nor *vice versa*. The precise and musical phrasing of his best poems, their harmonious poise and serenity, their restrained but passionate sense of locality—of being in a definite place and seeing definite things—show us that he does not put fact and feeling into separate compartments, and that his love and knowledge of the material world of nature do not debar him from a poetic and spiritual interpretation of it. He is a true and promises to be a great poet, because experience and feeling are at one, and expression is ample enough to embrace both.

351 191

The similarity of Mr. Davies's to the Elizabethan lyric is almost too obvious for comment, and the curious will not fail to find numerous parallels of phrase as well as mood. The famous opening lines of *Sephestia's Song to her Child*:

“ Weep not, my wanton, smile upon my knee,  
When thou art old, there's grief enough for thee ”—

are practically re-embodied, sentiment for sentiment and not very far from word for word, in the modern's:

“ What makes thee weep so, little child:  
What cause hast thou for all this grief?  
When thou art old much cause may be,  
And tears will bring thee no relief.”

But the modern variant is born not of imitation, but a kind of intuitive memory—an extraordinary outcrop in an age which has evolved as fundamentally from the

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Elizabethan habit of mind and method of expression as from the Lombardy poplar avenue effect of the heroic couplet. There are two lines of divergence, however, between the man in our midst and the age so remote in the poetic fashion of its song-books. The Elizabethan lyric was a convention, a formal mosaic which subordinated language to music; its appeal was more to the ear than to the eye. Mr. Davies writes to be read, not sung, and achieves a much greater variety, range, and economy of expression. But what really separates them are their totally different ways of looking at the world, the natural world. Mr. Davies is no naturalist, as Clare was, nor metaphysician of nature, like Wordsworth, and the love of women—the *primum mobile* of the lyric—often colours his personal reading of nature. But his handling of love is often—well, natural, in the human sense, and he never, or rarely, treats birds, beasts, and bushes as symbols of his delight in love. They are more often a permanent refuge from it and (as he conceives it) its passing delirium. But that refuge is in itself a flame, the essence of life, and, contentedly, he warms both hands at it. He is so like his dead brothers in song, but between them Nature has risen to her own life and looks at him with eyes truer and more lover-like than women's. The copyright barrier has prevented me from including *Raptures*, *Jenny Wren*, *The East in Gold*, *Robin Redbreast*, *The Kingfisher*, *The Owl*, *A Great Time*, and *The Hawk* from *Collected Poems* (1916), Mr. Davies's own selection of his works, from which this poem is taken as a typical specimen. Note the run-on line in the poem given, a technical device rare with Mr. Davies.

- 352 192 From *Tomfooleries by Tomfool*. There is a sandals-and-Jäger air about many of the songs of the humane company from which this gay and tender poet is quite free.
- 353 193 From *Poems* (1913). If the "conquest of nature" meant but what this beautiful poem reveals in such tender meditation, how much richer and happier should we, now living, be!
- 355 194 From *The Buzzards* (1921). Mr. Armstrong's poems are largely in the pose of still life; their rich, contrasted dyes are susceptible to a play, not of soul or of music, but of effects of light. But his Buzzards are not stuffed, and his verse seems to expand and flow to their great spiral curves and sweeping, crescentic lines. The calm wings of the soaring buzzard seem to fill the lungs of the whole landscape—its amphitheatre—to swing the horizon back and enlarge the world in sight. These lines in their turn seem capacious enough to contain the majestic pattern of that flight.

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- The Thrush* is omitted for reasons of copyright.
- 356 195 From *The Return of the Goldfinches* (1921).
- 359 196 From *Windlestraw* (1910).
- 360 197 First printed in *Twelve Poets : A Miscellany of New Verse* (1918).

[I have inserted this poem here, having omitted to send it until too late for the text.]

CHRISTOPHER SMART

(1722-1770)

LXVIII<sup>A</sup>

*ON AN EAGLE CONFINED IN A COLLEGE COURT*

IMPERIAL bird, who wont to soar  
High o'er the rolling cloud  
Where Hyperborean mountains hoar  
Their heads in ether shroud—  
Thou servant of almighty Jove,  
Who, free and swift as thought, could'st rove  
To the bleak north's extremest goal ;  
Thou who magnanimous could'st bear  
The sovereign thunderer's arms in air,  
And shake thy native pole !

O cruel fate ! what barbarous hand,  
What more than Gothic ire,  
At some fierce tyrant's dread command,  
To check they daring fire,  
Has placed thee in this servile cell,  
Where discipline and dullness dwell,  
Where genius ne'er was seen to roam ;  
Where every selfish soul's at rest,  
Nor ever quits the carnal breast,  
But lurks and sneaks at home.

Though dimmed thine eye, and clipped thy wing,  
So grov'ling, once so great,  
The grief-inspired Muse shall sing  
In tenderest lays thy fate.  
What time by thee Scholastic Pride  
Takes his precise, pedantic stride,  
Nor on thy misery casts a care,  
The stream of love n'er from his heart  
Flows out, to act fair pity's part,  
But stinks and stagnates there.

## CHRISTOPHER SMART

Yet useful still, hold to the throng—  
Hold the reflecting glass—  
That not untutored at thy wrong  
The passenger may pass :  
Thou type of wit and sense confined,  
Cramped by the oppressors of the mind,  
Who study downward on the ground ;  
Type of the fall of Greece and Rome—  
While more than mathematic gloom  
Envelops all around.

[The first collected edition of Smart's poems was in 1791. It does not include the Song to David, which, as might be expected, was stillborn to an age whose Zion was Otranto. Kit Smart's clouded and outcast life, with its strange mixture of prayer and drink, and with a rough rarely smoothed by such large tolerance and loving-kindness as Dr. Johnson's, is sharply reflected in the mordant and bitter feeling of this poem.]

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