To a Skylark

BY PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Hail to thee, blithe Spirit!

Bird thou never wert,

That from Heaven, or near it,

Poorest 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 day-light

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 Heaven is overflow'd.

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 dell of dew,

Scattering unbeholden

Its aëreal hue

Among the flowers and grass, which screen it from the view:

Like a rose embower'd

In its own green leaves,

By warm winds deflower'd,

Till the scent it gives

Makes faint with too much sweet those heavy-winged 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 flood of rapture so divine.

Chorus Hymeneal,

Or triumphal chant,

Match'd 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.

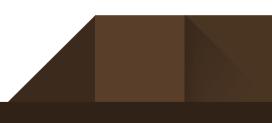
Waking or asleep,

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.

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