

# Nightingale

Samuel Taylor Coleridge



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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 moon—light, 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 twilights 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

## Nightingale

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 moonlight 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 those 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 perch 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 tomorrow 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!

## Nightingale

Full fain it would delay me! My dear babe,  
Who, capable of no articulate sound,  
Mimes 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 play-mate. 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,  
Suspended his sobs, and laughs most silently,  
While his fair eyes, that swam with undropped tears,  
Did glitter in the yellow moon-beam! 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