

To the Nightingale¹
by William Cowper

Whence is it, that amazed I hear,
From yonder withered spray,
This foremost morn of all the year,
The melody of May?

And why, since thousands would be proud
Of such a favour shown,
Am I selected from the crowd,
To witness it alone?

Sing'st thou, sweet Philomel, to me,
For that I also long
Have practised in the groves like thee,
Though not like thee, in song?

Or sing'st thou rather under force
Of some divine command,
Commissioned to presage a course
Of happier days at hand?

Thrice welcome then! for many a long
And joyless year have I,
As thou to-day, put forth my song
Beneath a wintry sky.

But thee no wintry skies can harm,
Who only need'st to sing,
To make e'en January charm,
And ev'ry season spring.

¹ The full title of William Cowper's poem is "To the Nightingale, Which the Author Heard on New-Year's Day, 1792."