

ON LISTENING TO BIRDS

By G. R. LOMER

UNDER the slowly shifting shade of ancient elm trees, the other day, I was roused from reading and from day-dreams by four robins who suddenly began singing with ardor and ease and persistence. This unexpected and continued avian chorus distracted and held my attention and started me wondering what their song could be about.

Up to that moment my understanding of the speech of birds had been limited, but not so much so as a spirit I once knew whose eyes were so turned inward that he could not have told a petrel from a pretzel. I was, I confess, of that dumb group of mortals—so scorned by amateur naturalists—who profess to know only ten wild flowers and ten birds, though their range among quadrupeds may be slightly more extended. As I had never belonged to a garden club or a bird-watching society, this limitation had hitherto proved no great inconvenience except perhaps conversationally.

I am, it must be admitted, but a poor linguist and a poorer musician. At first, after long and careful listening I thought I would try to write down the sounds that the birds were making, but for the music that went with the twitterings and full-throated song I knew of no flute or flageolet, lute or psaltery, that would do justice to the grace notes, turns, trills, roulades, cadenzas, and bravuras of these virtuosi of the forest and the field.

I was already familiar with a few of the more comprehensible bird sounds: I knew the anxious and encouraging cries of swallow parents superintending the initial take-off of their timorous young; I had often heard the harsh staccato agitation of grackles and robins at the silent and sudden appearance of a predatory cat in dangerous proximity to their nests.

“Tweet,” pipes the robin as the cat creeps by
Her nestling young that in the elderns lie,

wrote the poet John Clare, a century ago. As a child I had listened, with mouth agape like a very yokel, to a garrulous parliament of crows ranged upon a country fence. All these birds seemed to be intelligible to their own kind but not to me, and I must confess that I always felt out of it. This isolation would then produce a malaise which must have been akin to that of a Middle-Western American in Paris for the first time, and one felt that something should be done about it.

At the outset it must be acknowledged that there appears to be bird speech as well as bird song; but that makes the problem all the more difficult: one wonders why at times birds "speak" and at other they "sing." It would appear that birds know the difference between prose and poetry and when to use "S.O.S." and when a serenade. Why do some birds need such a great variety of vocal expression when, so far as I know, others can get through the day or night with the monotonous repetition of only one or two notes? I suppose that at least part of a bird's song may be just pure thoughtless rapture in fine easy flight on a day of clear air and bright sunshine; but there must be other occasions that call for vocal expression on urgent matters closer to earth. In listening to birds, with one's eyes as an aid to interpretation, one seems to detect a noticeable difference in cries that I have taken, with perhaps fallacious logic, to mean, "Look! Here's a big worm!" or "Don't be greedy or you'll fall out of the nest," or "Follow mamma and (*agitato*) use your tail as a brake in landing, you little stupid!" But, of course, the bird might have been saying something quite different. I have heard the conversation of Arabs and Russians and I know that sound can be deceptive as to meaning.

It was, however, this persistent robin-song that was still dominating my meditations, and I realized with the salutary shock that sometimes comes to academic minds, that I knew far less about the robin himself than I should. Once the varied and uneven tenor of my ways had, among other things, placed in my hands the administration of an ornithological library. Fortunately for me, the collection of books practically ran itself, having apparently learned from birds to avoid, as far as possible, the interference of mortals. My highly specialised colleagues responsible for its smooth operation must have frequently been bemused, with wonder if not consternation, at my ignorance of birds and bird books.

When I came to look into the volumes with whose covers and catalog cards I had hitherto alone been familiar, I found, first to my joy and then to my humiliation, that there were very many people who professed to understand birds well enough to write whole books about them. Like Balaam the son of Beor in the Bible and several charming characters in the fairy tales of our youth, they had been endowed, by divine benevolence or some gift-bearing spirit attendant on their birth, with ultra-human understanding of the speech of living things. Semantics for them was not limited to the multitudinous tongues of man-

kind. They professed, especially in books intended for children, to understand the beasts of the field and the birds of the air. But I wonder how they comprehended the giraffe, which I am told has no vocal cords. Was he for them the only dumb creature, or could they hear the earthworms, the butterflies, and some of the more microscopic hymenoptera? It may be that even the flea and the cootie have their own joyous hunting-cries which human ears have never heard. But for me, at the moment, the problems set by the vocal robins was quite enough. I wanted to find out what they said and why they sang.

The extent of my ignorance was immediately apparent when I learned, to begin with, that the Canadian robins to whom I had been listening were not robins but thrushes. The Canadian or American robin is not at all the same bird as the English robin, which it resembles only superficially. The French call it "le merle d'Amerique" but the big books christen it *Planesticus migratorius* or, as it really is a thrush, *Turdus migratorius*; whereas the English robin was known to Linnaeus as *Motacilla rubecula* and to modern writers as *Erithacus rubecula*. *Punch*, not unaware of the ponderosity of scientific nomenclature, once published a drawing of two learned dons, one of whom, in confiding an academic secret, is saying to the other, "A little *Erithacus rubecula melophilus* told me." I am sure, however, that a robin by any other name would sing as sweetly.

The English robin is more dumpy than the American, but neither its shape nor its color nor the high regard in which it has always been held by bird-lovers prevented its plumage being quite generally used at one time to trim ladies' dresses and to adorn Christmas cards and Valentines. It is really a near relative to the nightingale and its song somewhat resembles that of the blackbird.

The robin of Canada and the United States is one of the most familiar and easily distinguishable of birds, rather a clumsy architect, and the favorite outdoor sport of the hunting cat. According to a publication of the Canadian Government, it is a useful adjunct to the stations distributing information about the weather, for "its cheery voice is the harbinger of spring. Its song is the first heard in the morning and the last at night, and, in the autumn when it has stripped the rowan tree of its last berry and has disappeared, we know that winter is upon us." As for me, there are other ways, equally persuasive, of knowing when winter is upon me than searching for a rowan tree denuded by a robin, but confirmatory evidence is always welcome. Pro-

longed examination of the stomachs—or is it crops?—of robins has convinced even pessimistic farmers and dubious fruit-growers of its value, as 42 percent of its food has been found to consist of insects. Indeed, the Australian poet might have said of the robin as appropriately as he did of the cuckoo:

“I wear an air of innocence:
And, while the green grubs last,
My singing vigor is immense,
My appetite is vast.”

It does not require a profound knowledge of literature in English to realise how often singing birds, headed by the nightingale, flit in and out of its pages, where one seeks in vain for a laudable mention of the mosquito, the hippopotamus, the skunk, or the duck-billed platypus. It does not require a minute examination of anthologies to make one realise that poets and prose-writers without number from at least Chaucer's time have paid enough wordy homage to robin alone to fill a whole book. The aviary of the poets is full of color and motion and song. Richard Barnfield, a contemporary of Shakespeare, wrote in *The Affectionate Shepherd*,

“A robin redbreast shall thy minstrel be
Chirping thee sweet and pleasant melody.”

Oliver Goldsmith had also been impressed by the song of the robin. In his *History of the Earth and Animated Nature*, he noted that “there is a little bird rather celebrated for its affection to mankind than its singing, which, however, in our climate has the sweetest note of all others. The note of other birds is louder and their inflexions more capricious, but this bird's voice is soft, tender, and well supported.” The pedestrian but romantic William Wordsworth calls the robin “the pensive warbler of the ruddy breast.” Keats, “half in love with easeful Death,” as he sat in his chair at the breakfast-table one morning in a Hampstead garden, had given to the nightingale a literary immortality, and either he or his brother had “written off in a few minutes” the words of a song to the robin that began “Stay, ruby-throated warbler, stay.” Shelley, also inspired by the nightingale, had sung in an early poem of “that sweet bird, whose music was a storm of sound” and had, in better poetry, paid his tribute to that blithe spirit, the soaring skylark. Tennyson wrote, with no similar inspiration, upon the lintwhite, the throstlecock, the owl, and the falcon. Meredith wrote, but not

as Shelley, about the skylark, and about the nightingale but not as Keats, and poems about the blackbird, the "robin of the bright red breast," and the thrush. His inspiration was highest when he wrote of the lark ascending

"As up he wings the spiral stair,
A song of light, and pierces air . . .
An ecstasy to music turned."

The robin plays his part in the mythology of the American continent. Whittier relates anew the old Welsh legend that the robin got his red breast from mercifully carrying in his bill drops of water for the sinning souls in Hell, whose fires had scorched the feathers of his breast. The North American Indians, too, have a legend that a red-skinned youth of the tribe, unable to endure the severe tests of becoming a warrior, was benevolently changed, by a good spirit, into a red breasted bird; and another legend of the far Northland tells how the land would have come under the cruel and frigid sway of the Polar Bear, who would have entirely quenched the comforting campfires of Man but for a gray bird who fanned a dying ember to life and thus preserved fire for mankind, though in doing so her breast was burned red.

The robin has, indeed, always been regarded as a bird friendly to man, and there are countless stories recorded of tame robins. Mary Wordsworth, the wife of the Lake poet, when breakfasting alone at Ambleside, was accustomed to have two or three robins come in by the open window, hop upon the table, and share her meditative meal. But perhaps the ultimate example of entering into human habitations and habits was given by the robin who, celebrating Christmas, ate too eagerly of plum pudding and brandy sauce and had to be removed, inertly recumbent upon the table, to sleep off the effects of his festive orgy.

The robin, in addition to his friendliness, has always been esteemed for his song. A namesake of the famous pirate, William Kidd of Hammersmith, "a genial and bird-like man" who habitually wrote of feminine fashions, kind hearts, and robins, gives this advice to those misguided persons who would cage the redbreast and keep him to supply domestic melody before the days of radio:

"If you would have a good songster, and a friend at the same time, procure what we characterise as a "grey,"—that is, a young robin caught soon after leaving the nest. He will then moult

in his new dwelling and get used to his fate. These young 'greys sing sweetly and continue in song all through the winter and early spring . . . You may purchase, if you will, three or four 'greys.' Keep them in separate cages and prevent them from seeing each other. They will soon discover their vocal powers."

The tender-hearted lover of liberty will be pleased to learn that Mr. Kidd has a conscience, for he goes on to say:

"Our readers will now perhaps ask us, seriously, whether we *recommend* so joyous a bird as the robin to be immured in a cage. Recommend such an act of excessive impropriety! Surely not. And simply for this reason. Where there is one living tender heart to be found, there are at least a thousand made of stone or iron. On such 'bird-keepers' our advice (kind though it be) will be thrown away."

When I was a child and thought as a child—a habit that occasionally resurrects itself—I was firm in the belief that the crow, "with voice of care" as Chaucer says, was the only bird common in the North which is not operatic. It speaks a monosyllabic and repetitive prose. I have since learned that there are other birds that speak instead of sing. But the words of the librettos of those who sing are as incomprehensible to me as are those of the Metropolitan or Covent Garden to most of the audience. It is the music of which we are conscious and which compensates us for getting only a general sense of the meaning. I have now learned that there are a number of birds to whose raucous, discordant cacophony no one would ever impute the quality of music. Perhaps the winds and the wastes and the great waters use them as a mouthpiece, for no sweet notes of forest or of field ever issue from the greater birds of prey or from ducks, geese, and swans, or from gulls and terns and skuas, auks, gannets, or cormorants.

Perhaps, thought Swinburne, in swift unerring motion, sailing and banking and diving, there is compensation for the sea-mew in being mute:

"The lark knows no such rapture,
Such joy no nightingale,
As sways the songless measure
Wherein thy wings take pleasure."

I remember the discordant solicitous quacks of the maternal duck marshalling her peeping downy brood, the decisive click of the pelican's bill after a fish had disappeared into its elastic yellow pouch, the nostalgic honk and hiss of restless geese, and the con-

tented conversation of hens inspecting their barnyard fare: no, here was no music. These birds were intent upon the prosaic matters of daily life. Theirs was none of the careless rapture or fine frenzy of the creatures of the lower air. They were for the most part earthbound, having wings but no regard for the fine freedom of the windy spaces or the call of the blue sky. There are others that are for the most part mute and become temporarily vocal only when seeking, or seeking to impress a mate. I have never been where, knowingly, I heard the scolding of the caracara, the gadwall, or the barbet. Perhaps they, and others of their ilk, sing too, but their music has never reached the ear accustomed to the sounds of the barnyard and the city. There are generous ornithologists who do not care to condemn too harshly and are inclined to regard as borderline cases the titmouse, the woodpecker, petrels, game birds, and some of the owls.

The human ear, we know, has its limitations. Few have had so delicate a sense of hearing that they have been entranced by the music of the spheres, and most of us unfortunately shall never be surprised, at dusk or dawn, by overhearing the conversation of some of those insects whose range is beyond that of our limited human receiving-sets. There are, it is true, creatures that are dumb and blind, or both, which nevertheless have their own private means of communication; but I like to believe that they are not too numerous, for who would deprive even the least of these of the social pleasure and utility of conversation? Even the pig, when one contemplates it without anticipations of appetite, seems to find satisfaction in its guttural exclamations. I have known people whose conversational range was almost as limited but must have been sufficient for their self-centered purposes.

But the grunts of animals and human beings have in themselves nothing of the elation and the unfettered joy of the song of birds. I have sometimes thought that the enduring popularity of opera is due to the fact that the actors let themselves "go" vocally. People seem to get a vicarious satisfaction from the transmutation of a prosaic "I love you" or "I hate you" into a lyrical mystical aria,

"A press of hurried notes that run
So fleet they scarce are more than one."

But it is above all the birds that arouse one's envy and put to shame the inertia of our own vocal cords and tongue and li

Most of us, if we have not buried our talent in a napkin, have at least lapped it in laziness. If the mute flower in the crannied wall has a lesson for us, surely the variably vocal birds bring home to us the limitations we place upon the powers of human musical expression.

There are among wingless bipeds some who, through lack of imagination or through the exclusive domination of other interests, profess not to be interested in feathered bipeds. Of them a Mrs. Spratt wrote, a year after Tennyson had published *In Memoriam*,

"The intense pleasure I derive from the melody of birds, in their natal bowers, would, no doubt, to many persons appear ridiculous or as affectation."

Mrs. Spratt must have had a kindly disposition or have been a sound sleeper not to have been disturbed at dawn by the insistent clamor of sparrows in the vines outside her window. Probably the former, for she appropriated a room, called her "concert room," with a view of the garden, for the use of some birds that had been presented to her. She decorated the room with roses and fuchsias and provided pots of chickweed and plantain and pans of water, "taking care to have the floor pretty thickly sprinkled with coarse sand." She was much impressed by the unselfish conduct of a female canary and remarked "what a pattern was here exhibited for every female to imitate in their conduct to those partners assigned to them by fate."

This interest in bird song is of long duration and has aroused the curiosity of many persons. As early as the first century of our era, Pliny, with his usual assurance, had written in his *Natural History* that the notes of the nightingale were "modulated in accordance with strict rules of musical science"; but more modern students, such as Henry Oldys, prefer to say more elaborately that "the evolution of bird music independently parallels the evolution of human music and that, therefore, such evolution in each case is not fortuitous but tends inevitably toward a fixed ideal." But when one comes to the description, recording, and reproduction of the songs of birds, one meets with difficulties and problems. The ordinary adjectives of human speech when applied to bird song are relatively meaningless and only approximately descriptive: "chippery", "sibilant", "emphatic twitter", "chatter", "gurgling whistle", "metallic", "rattle-like", "insect-like buzz", "squeaky", "plaintive", "frica-

tive", and "sibilous" seem to leave something to be desired in the way of musical suggestiveness.

The problem of putting down on paper, either in letters or in the limited notes of our modern musical scale, the extraordinary variety of screeches, cries, calls, warbles, trills, twitters, and booms of the birds one meets on a walk or sees in a Zoo faces one with a translation far worse than converting Fahrenheit into Réaumur or English into American money. It is hard to know where or how to begin.

It is perhaps natural that people, according to their usual procedure of apperception and *similis similitur*, saw in bird song, or pretended to, various sounds that approximated to something said in English by foreigners whom one tried sympathetically to understand. In this way the whippoorwill got its name. Other birds were understood to say "Drink your tea" and "I'm so tired," or "Very, very pleased to meetcha." The quail pleaded "Wet my lips"; the yellow hammer was understood to ask for "A little bit of bread and no chee-ese"; and the chaffinch demanded insistently "Go, fetch me two bottles of ginger beer."

But these flights of imaginative interpretation lead one dangerously near to the pathetic fallacy and did not suit some of the more literally minded ornithologists. These formed a phonetic school and produced wonders of their own in the way of vocal transliteration. Beginning with the easy ones, they found that some birds say "tililip", "chebeck", "cuckoo" or "chissick" and that the more gifted ones manage polysyllables such as "see-see-see-sissypee" and "teevo-cheevo-cheevio-chee-weedio-weedio."

But apparently the human ear does not always hear the same sounds, for various persons have interpreted the quail's cry as "twit-me-dick", "picker-wick", "peek-wheet-wheet", or "bi-ke-bik, bi-ke-bik, bi-ke-bit". Why, then, couldn't people agree upon how to write down the song that the birds were singing? It should be possible, yet the more one listened the more one became disturbed by the quirks and oddities of an unknown tongue, an unwonted speed of utterance, and a musical scale that has no regard for sharps and flats. Those persons who speak only English are perhaps in the worse case: their sounds are so limited and so unadaptable. When one listens to the liquid speech of the Chinese or the guttural achievements of the Arabs, one realises whole areas of limpidity and of harshness that are not included in the more restricted scale of monotonous Anglo-Saxon speech.

There are obviously serious gaps in our alphabet. These do not worry most of us, who have enough difficulty in using correctly the twenty-six letters which it provides for the everyday purposes of human life. But the birds have apparently never been taught the A B C. They have evolved an alphabet of their own which is a challenge to our attentive ear and to our willing but helpless pen. I seem to catch, in this morning song of the robins, adumbrations of sound that appear somewhat like K and L and Q and there may be I and U, but no O or A or B or D. These poor attempts at listening so convinced me of stupidity or ineptness that they drove me to seek the aid of what others have written in books on birds. Not being by nature or profession a curious naturalist, I might never have done so but for this morning's arboreal concert, and it served but to deepen my conviction of ignorance. It was, however, not of much assistance to find one book describing the song of the robin thus:

"Phrases generally of two or three notes, most of them with the notes connected by liquid consonants. Phrases separated by short pauses, but after four to eight phrases there is a longer pause, so that the phrases are divided into groups. Each individual bird uses six to ten different phrases. Quality clear and musical."

Even in the recording of the song of the robin there seems to be no certainty. One says that it is "Teela tolay tolay tolay teetalo" (though "tolay" has apparently nothing to do with eggs), and another hears the melody as "Teelalo tolah alayla aloha hehe aloo teelilay aylee", which, in my ignorance, sounds like Chinese or Esquimaux. It was a surprise to learn that robins could whisper—at least, during courtship, when they sing with closed bills a song apparently intended for only the ear of a not-distant and attentive mate. But even among birds all occasions are not amorous. Naturally the character of bird song depends upon the cause or the occasion. You cannot expect the same reaction at the sudden sight of a worm or a serpent. Occasions of alarm do not admit the pouring forth of one's soul in strains of unpremeditated art, and the satisfaction of seeing a nest full of lusty young produces melodies that differ from the triumphal wonder at the first egg in the nest. But sometimes birds seem to go beyond the home circle for their inspiration. It is recorded that in 1921 at Fairfield, Conn., there was heard a house wren endowed with nine different and recognizable songs. The catbird, the starling, the mocking-bird and the parrot have, among others, the ability to copy the songs of dif-

ferent birds so closely as to deceive the human ear. There are also human bird imitators who try to do the same, but I do not for a moment think that they fool the birds themselves.

I admire the concentrated attention, tonal sensibility, and transcriptive power of the bird-listeners who record bird songs in musical notation in the key of C-major. These people say, in print, that some birds manage to sing:

“Chissi ching ching chis i ching ching
Sin see doish sin see doish
Spreeken see doish
Bobbo link Bobbo link Bobbo link.”

or, even better, with sharps and flats indicated:

“Glo glo glo glo glo glo
pee pee pee pee ,
Boblobloblobloblobloblob
Tewy tewy tewy tewy tewy tewy
Tew tew tew tew.”

This insistence on the musical aspect of birds, however, was not new. In the eighteenth century the Hon. Daines Barrington concocted a table of merit for the judgment of bird songs and marked the vocalists for mellowness of tone, sprightly notes, plaintive notes, compass, and execution. According to him the nightingale rated 90 out of 100 and the English robin only 51. To the blackbird he gave black marks—only 12. In 1800 Dr. Gainborg of Copenhagen invented a plan to improve the songs of wild birds by exposing them to instruction by such masters of the art as nightingales and canaries. So convinced are ornithologists of the value of bird music that various notations besides the scale used by the human orchestra have been devised, including straight and wavy lines, broken lines, dots of various sizes, and on checked paper astounding graphs that resemble the records of earthquakes or alarming business conditions. But it is only in the last few years that mobile recording studios, intent on making scientific discs, have followed the devious steps of the bird-watchers, have tracked the songsters to their lairs, and have made records of birds singing even a mile away. The Parlophone in England, for example, made microphone records of the robin's song and discovered that it has a range of frequency of 1400 to 4500, but that does not seem to be of much help to an amateur ornithologist with two ears but no meter.

However, thanks to these energetic and practical scientists, we can now hear at ornithological conventions, in our own home, or in a public library, the native woodnotes wild of a whole aviary of birds, including the skylark and the nightingale, which we had hitherto most frequently met in printed poems which appealed to the eye more than to the ear. For instance, what of the lark says Seumas O'Sullivan's *In Mercer Street*?

"Bubbling, note on note,
Rise fountain-like, o'erflow and float
Tide upon tide, and make more fair
The magic of the sunlit air."

But these words, such as they are, are not so good, so appealing, so evocative of emotion, as the magic of the bird song itself, even though canned and not fresh-plucked from the bough.

In answering my often naive questions about bird song, my bird-watching and bird-listening friends had often reduced me to a limp state of self-conscious Socratic ignorance. There was some mystery that was just beyond my grasp. The stuffed birds I had seen in museums seemed but the denizens of some avian cemetery, motionless and mute; the books about birds that I had looked upon to guide me had led me into a wilderness of prosaic and often vague description or of precise scientific classification in which all the vividness and joy and motion of life had dwindled, evaporated, and died.

It was, I concluded, the living, vibrant, soaring and darting birds that interested me, as it had the poets who wrote of the soaring singing skylark and the melodiously melancholy nightingale but not frequently of the dignified judicial stuffed owl or the dusty glass case of iridescent but immobile humming birds which seem strangely unreal when thus permanently poised and unstartled.

After one has been listening to the song of birds for some time or, later, musing about their singing, little interrogation points dance before one's mind's eye like distracting gnats. One is inflated, like a child, with questions, and who shall answer them? I kept wondering, for instance, whether one kind of bird understands what another kind of bird is saying or singing. I wonder what makes them start or stop. I wonder why they keep repeating the same thing: do they enjoy it or are they just heedless as children who enjoy repetition and keep on saying "Why?" and "When do we eat?" more because they like asking questions than because the answer interests them. Why do some birds sit down comfortably to sing while others burst into

song only on the wing? What effect do the sun and moon and the seasons have upon the song of birds! And what sort of calendar do the birds have which tells them when to go on tour and take their melody to other lands?

It takes but little observation to convince one that the operatic habit of birds is in notable contrast to the daily ways of human beings. Do not our vocal cords tire of constant vibration to a monotone? Even the Church seems to have developed a predilection for E-flat which to angelic ears, if they listen, must eventually become somewhat tiresome. The birds, in their vocal abandon, show us a better way but to no purpose. Man is prone to content himself with his bath-tub matin song, and we do not often hear the house-wife going about her daily chores singing at the top of her voice "Breakfast is ready" or (*agitato*) "Baby is falling out of his crib" or (*sotto voce*) "There's a suspicious-looking character prowling in the lane." We really do not make music a part of our daily lives as the birds do. Perhaps we should take more time to listen to them, for they tell us how it can be done, if we have ears to hear. No one, conversely, would want the robins to sing as—and what—human beings sing. God forbid! But I felt that humanity, preoccupied with the revelations of the super-telescope and the super-microscope and with super-instruments of offence which may so easily become an inescapable boomerang, was perhaps neglecting an obvious source of peace and content. These robins were apparently singing because they were happy. So few human songs are songs of happiness. Too many people have either never learned or have forgotten some obvious sources of happiness.

They have shut their eyes to the beauties of the country, have refused the peace that comes with contemplating broad prospects and soaring clouds, and their ears have become deaf to the sound of running water, the language of the wind, and the melodious song of birds. Cease forthwith to shut out these sights and sounds. Learn to hearken again to a wandering voice in the heavens above echoing the music of the spheres thus made audible to man, merging light and melody. Let the blue air again become vocal with clear celestial song that seems to come from nowhere and is yet a pervading aerial harmony, insubstantial and elusive, lifting the soul to ecstasy and a deep content, translating eternity for a melodious moment, and evoking echoes and lost memories of the birds that sang in the branches of every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food in the Garden of Eden.