

richest writing could be enlarged by true commentary to an almost indefinite extent. Shelley's Ode to the West Wind—from the creative point of view, the finest in our literature—is one grand series of associated images. A man gifted with artistic skill of an inferior kind might take many a line thence as the dominant image of a sonnet, and so, by elaboration, make a little volume. Let me endeavour to find the main idea-path through Shelley's Skylark. At eventide the bird begins to ascend; it is like a cloud of fire in the *blue* deep; then it flies westward to the *golden* lightning of the sunken sun, then on through the pale *purple* even until it is as a star in the daylight—invisible: three stanzas with motion predominant. Since motion can no longer be dwelt on, its consequence, invisibility, forms the main theme. The star invisible suggests the moon, invisible; the invisible moon, a striking effect of cloudy moonlight; cloudy moonlight, the gorgeous colour-effect of rainbow clouds—these effects being set to the key-note of the poem, the bird's song. Then succeed four conspicuous images, the remains of perhaps a score, with invisibility or deep seclusion running through all:—

Like a poet hidden
In the light of thought.

Like a high born maiden
In a palace tower.

Like a glow-worm golden
In a dell of dew.

Like a rose embowered
In its own green leaves.

In the complete stanzas it will be found that these images of seclusion are blended with sound, colour, odour; sound, the key-note, again becomes predominant; the nature of the bird's song is considered, its object, its influence. This element gets more pronounced towards the close until the poem ends with the note of its commencement:—

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.

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Better than all measures
Of delightful sound,