

Philomel and Progne

by Jean de La Fontaine

From home and city spires, one day,
 The swallow Progne flew away,
 And sought the bosky dell
 Where sang poor Philomel.
"My sister," Progne said, "how do you do?
'Tis now a thousand years since you
Have been conceal'd from human view;
I'm sure I have not seen your face
 Once since the times of Thrace.
Pray, will you never quit this dull retreat?"
"Where could I find," said Philomel, "so sweet?"
"What! sweet?" cried Progne--"sweet to waste
Such tones on beasts devoid of taste
Or on some rustic, at the most!
Should you by deserts be engross'd?
Come, be the city's pride and boast.
Besides, the woods remind of harms
That Tereus in them did your charms."
"Alas!" replied the bird of song,
"The thought of that so cruel wrong
 Makes me, from age to age,
 Prefer this hermitage;
For nothing like the sight of men
Can call up what I suffer'd then."