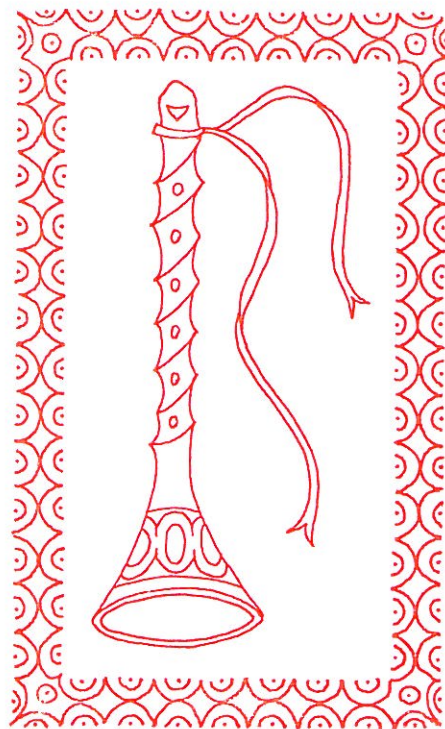






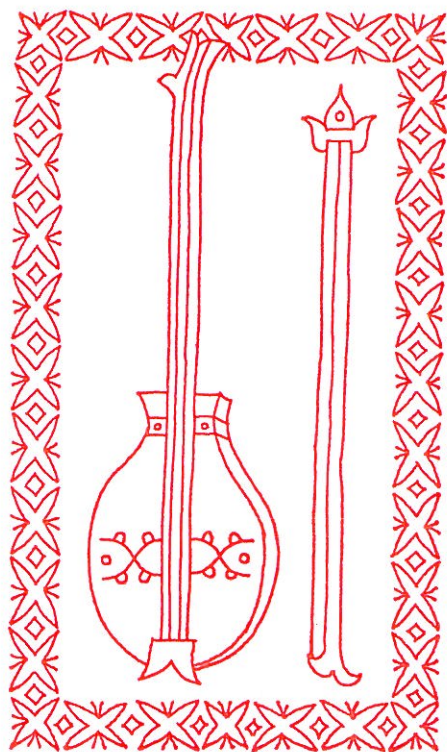
Once upon a time in a rather lonely place there lived a man gifted by nature with extraordinary curiosity and a keen mind. For pleasure, he raised different birds whose songs he enjoyed. With wonder he observed how artfully they were able to form their songs with the very air they breathed, all of them so sweet.

One night near his house he chanced to hear a delicate tune; not being able to imagine that it was anything but some bird, he set out to locate it. Coming to a road, he found a shepherd boy blowing into a kind of hollow tube of wood. As he moved his fingers along the tube, now opening and again closing the holes which were let into the tube, the shepherd brought from it airs like those of birds, but even more varied. Overcome by natural curiosity, the man traded the boy a calf to win the flute.



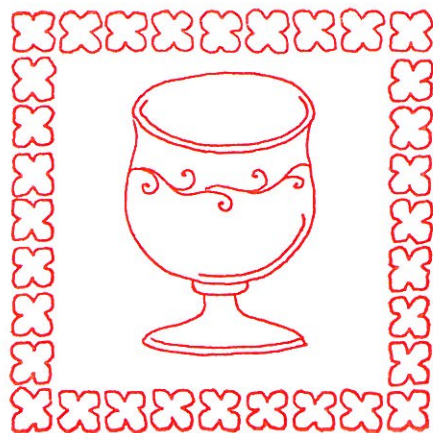
Once home alone, he came to realize that had he not happened to meet the shepherd, he would never have known that in nature there were two ways of forming sweet song. He decided to set out into the world looking forward to meeting with some other adventure.

The following day he happened to pass close by a little hut. He could hear within it another similar tone. To satisfy himself that it was a flute, or perhaps a caged blackbird, he went in, to find a youth with a bow in his right hand, drawing it across some strings stretched taut on a hollow wooden box. With his left hand the young man held the instrument while his fingers played over it. Without the use of breath at all the fiddler brought forth diverse and melodious sounds.

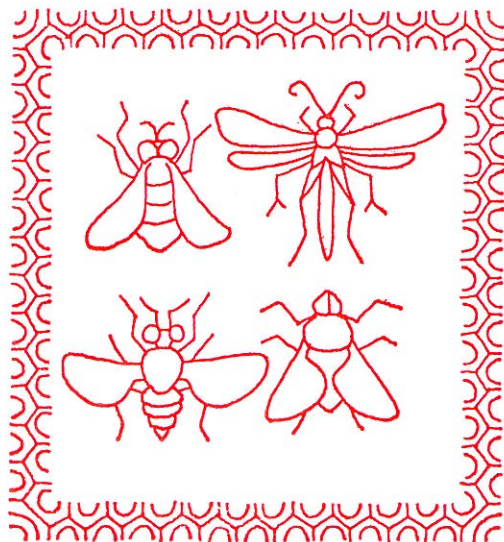


Judge the man's astonishment, you who share his curiosity and see the workings of his mind; having now been surprised by two new and unexpected ways of forming tunes, he began<sup>\*</sup> to believe that still other means could exist in nature. What was his wonder when, on entering a certain temple, he looked behind the gate to see what had sounded, to find that the tone had come from the hinges and metal fastenings which moved when he opened the door?

Another time, full of curiosity,  
he went into a tavern, expect-  
ing to see someone lightly  
playing a bow across the  
strings of a violin, only to see  
a man rubbing a fingertip  
around the rim of a goblet, to  
bring out a pleasant tone.



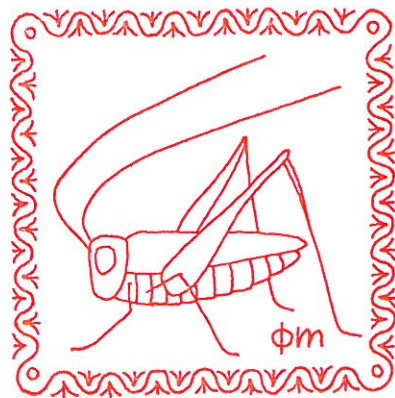




But when he observed that wasps, mosquitoes and flies formed their unending hum not, like his birds, by making notes one by one with the breath, but by beating their wings with great speed, he was so surprised that his conviction that he knew how sounds were made was diminished.

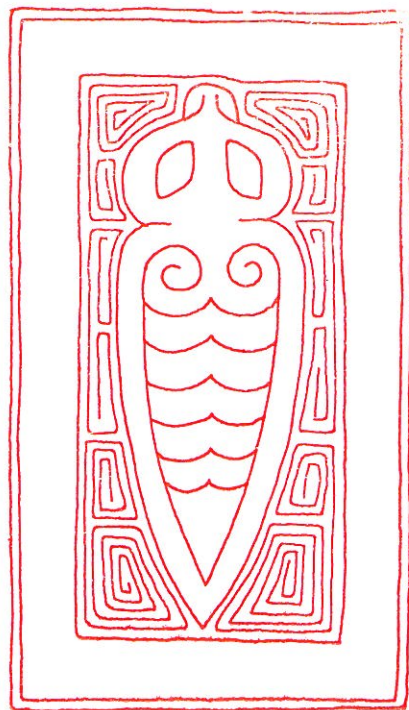


He saw that from all his experience he did not know enough to understand or even to believe that crickets not able to fly, possessing no breath, can yet extract their sweet and sonorous calls by slowly scraping their wings.



After he had finally come to believe that it was next to impossible that there could be any new way to form tone, having observed not only all these methods, but organs, trumpets, fifes, stringed instruments of every sort, and even that little iron tongue held between the teeth which in a strange way uses the mouth as sounding box and the breath as a vehicle of sound --- when, I say, this man believed he had seen everything, he found himself thrown deeper than ever into ignorance and astonishment when he caught a cicada in his hands.

Neither by stopping its mouth nor by holding its wings could he at all lessen its high stridency. Yet he could see no other scaly part moving, until finally he lifted up the casing of its chest to find underneath certain hard thin membranes. Believing that the sound might originate from their vibration, he undertook to break the discs to silence the song.



But all was in vain, for piercing the insect he took away its life with its voice, and still he was not sure whence the song had come.

Thereafter, he was reduced to such diffidence about his knowledge that when one asked him how sounds were made, he freely allowed that though he knew some ways, he was sure that there must be a hundred others still unknown and unimaginable.



*This fable has been printed  
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*He has translated it  
from the Italian of Galileo  
helped by the English  
of Stillman Drake  
She has drawn the figures  
It is made to give to their friends*