**Sympathy**

By Paul Laurence Dunbar (1899)

 I know what the caged bird feels, alas!
        When the sun is bright on the upland slopes;
    When the wind stirs soft through the springing grass,
    And the river flows like a stream of glass;
        When the first bird sings and the first bud opes,
    And the faint perfume from its chalice steals —
    I know what the caged bird feels!

    I know why the caged bird beats his wing
        Till its blood is red on the cruel bars;
    For he must fly back to his perch and cling
    When he fain would be on the bough a-swing;
        And a pain still throbs in the old, old scars
    And they pulse again with a keener sting —
    I know why he beats his wing!

    I know why the caged bird sings, ah me,
        When his wing is bruised and his bosom sore,—
    When he beats his bars and he would be free;
    It is not a carol of joy or glee,
        But a prayer that he sends from his heart's deep core,
    But a plea, that upward to Heaven he flings —
    I know why the caged bird sings!