

**SHELLEY:
AN ESSAY**

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Shelley: An Essay by Francis Thompson

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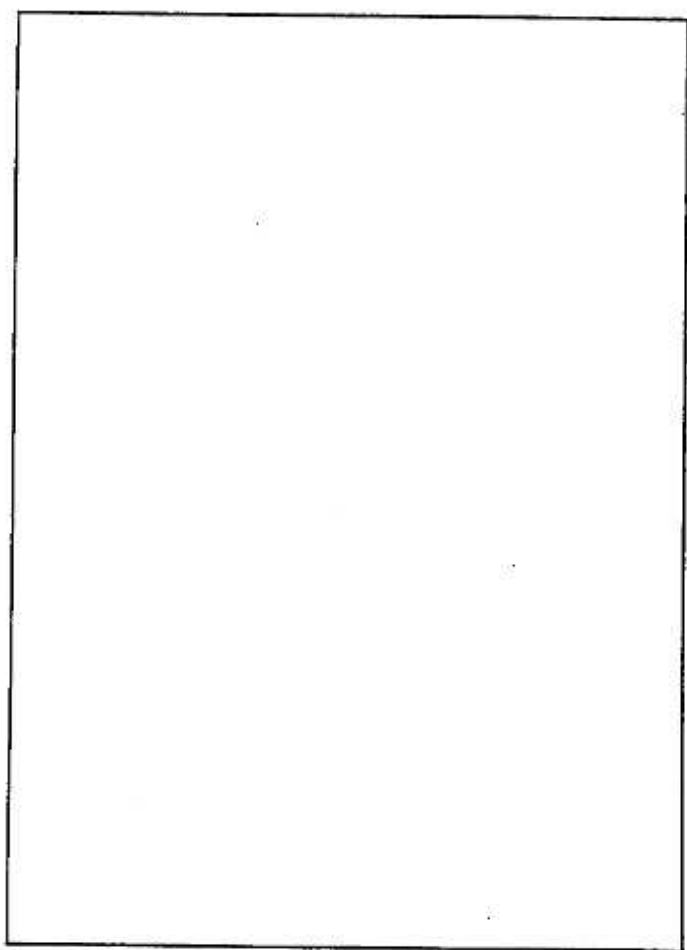
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FRANCIS THOMPSON

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AN ESSAY BY
FRANCIS THOMPSON



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THE QUIET SINGER

(AVE! FRANCIS THOMPSON)

HE had been singing—but I had not
heard his voice;
He had been weaving lovely dreams
of song,

O many a morning long.

But I, remote and far,

Under an alien star,

Listened to other singers, other birds,

And other silver words.

But does the skylark, singing sweet and clear,

Beg the cold world to hear?

Rather he sings for very rapture of singing,

At dawn, or in the blue, mild Summer noon,

Knowing that, late or soon,

His wealth of beauty, and his high notes, ringing

Above the earth, will make some heart rejoice.

He sings, albeit alone,

Spendthrift of each pure tone,

Hoarding no single song,

No cadence wild and strong.

1889. The quiet singer of Francis Thompson. 1889.

But one day, from a friend far overseas,
As if upon the breeze,
There came the teeming wonder of his words—
A golden troop of birds,
Caged in a little volume made to love;
Singing, singing,
Flinging, flinging
Their breaking hearts on mine, and swiftly bringing
Tears, and the peace thereof.
How the world woke anew!
How the days broke anew!
Before my tear-blind eyes a tapestry
I seemed to see,
Woven of all the dreams dead or to be.
Hills, hills of song, Springs of eternal bloom,
Autumns of golden pomp and purple gloom
Were hung upon his loom.
Winters of pain, roses with awful thorns,
Yet wondrous faith in God's dew-drenched moros—
These, all these I saw,
With that ecstatic awe
Wherewith one looks into Eternity.

And then I knew that, though I had not heard
His voice before,
His quiet singing, like some quiet bird

THE QUIET SINGER

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At some one's distant door,
Had made my own more sweet; had made it more
Lovely, in one of God's miraculous ways.
I knew then why the days
Had seemed to me more perfect when the Spring
Came with old burgeoning;
For somewhere in the world his voice was raised,
And somewhere in the world his heart was breaking;
And never a flower but knew it, sweetly taking
Beauty more high and noble for his sake,
As a whole wood grows lovelier for the wail
Of one sad nightingale.

Yet if the Springs long past
Seemed wonderful before I heard his voice,
I tremble at the beauty I shall see
In seasons still to be,
Now that his songs are mine while Life shall last.
O now for me
New floods of visions open suddenly. . . .
Rejoice, my heart! Rejoice
That you have heard the Quiet Singer's voice!

CHARLES HANSON TOWNE