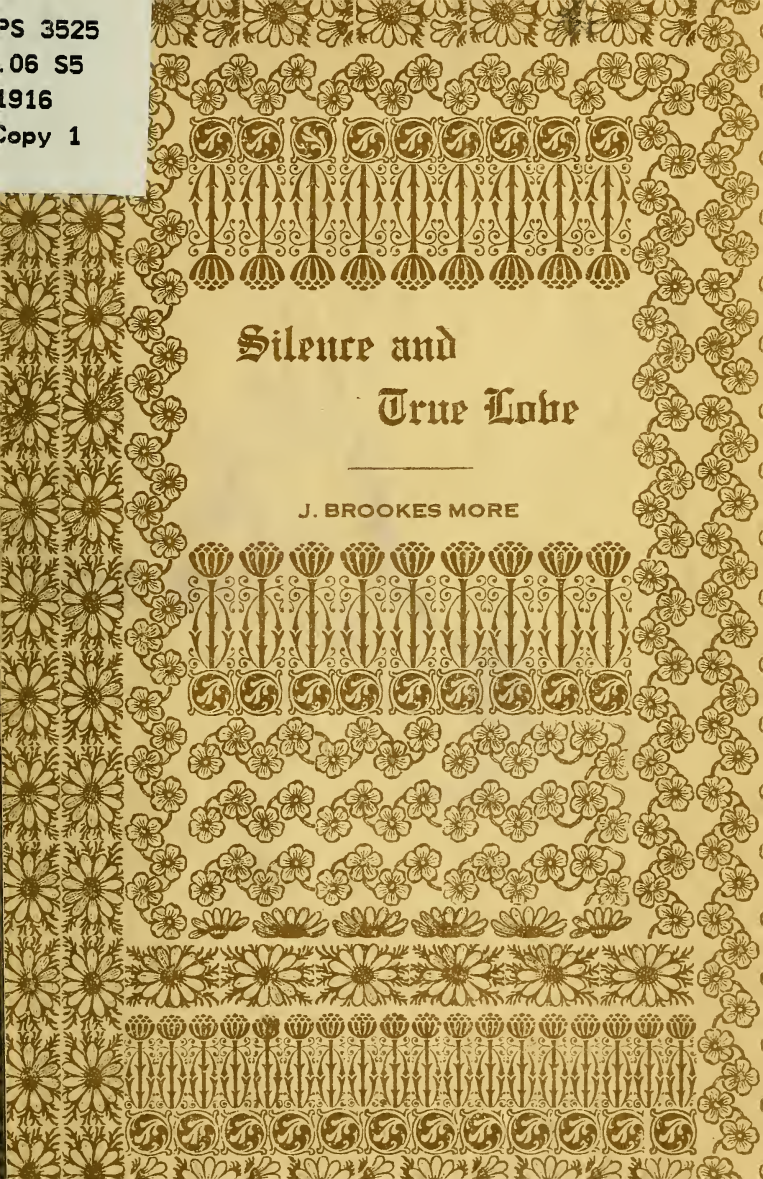


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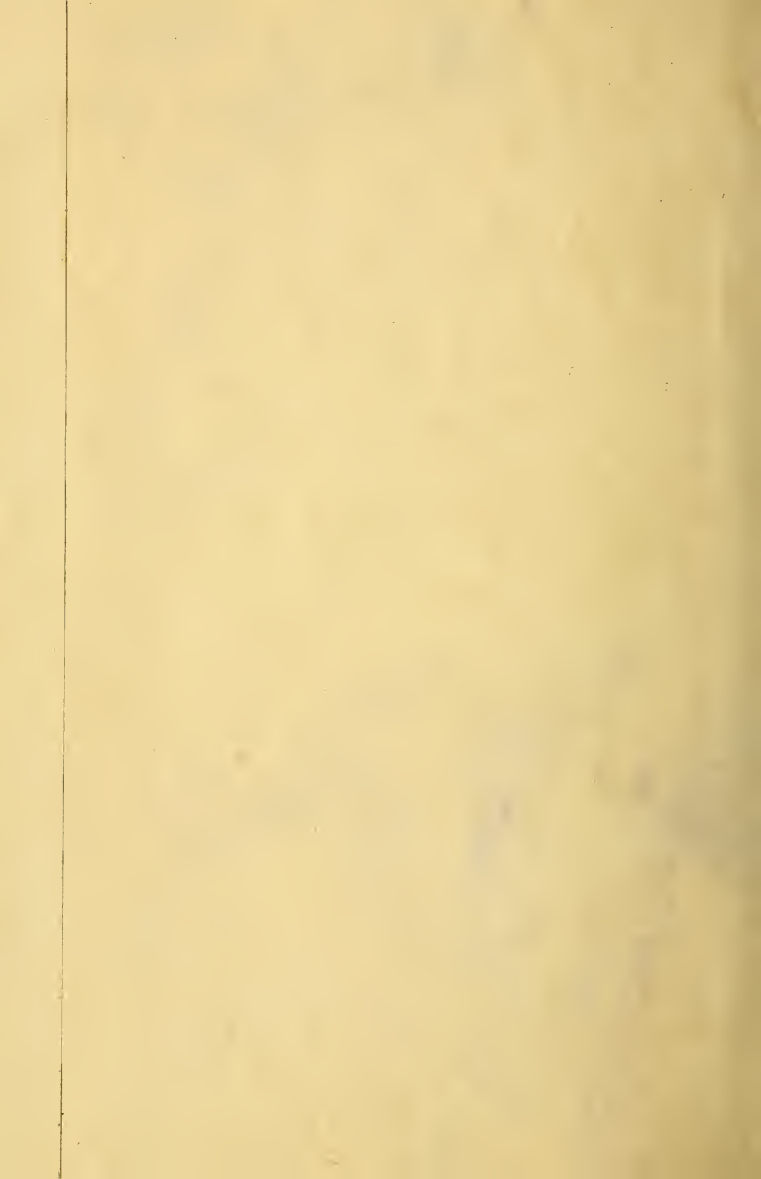
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Silence and
True Love

J. BROOKES MORE



Silence and True Love

Transl. By
J. Brookes More

(Based on W. A. Falconer's Prose
Translation of Silence.)



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J. Brookes More

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SILENCE AND TRUE LOVE

This poem is based on a beautiful translation, by Mr. W. A. Falconer, of Mæterlinck's "Silence." Mr. Falconer kindly lent me his manuscript, and I was so impressed with its subtle psychology, that I asked permission to turn his prose into verse, which he granted. I have omitted about a third of it, and used other parts so freely, even by putting in thoughts of my own, that I should hesitate to call this a poetical translation or a paraphrase; although parts of it may keep closely to the original. I hope Mr. Falconer's translation will be published.

NOV 20 1916

J. B. M.

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Silence and True Love

Oh, let us in our adoration raise
An altar unto Silence, under whose
Inspiring wings immortal hopes are brought
Majestically perfect to the light,
Surrounding life, and which they dominate.

Not William only was the silent one,
But all mankind, whose deeds are worthy note,
While secretly their hands and brains create.
Then why should we perplex our little hour,
With vacillating speech, if but a day
In quiet thought may make our duty clear?

The silent moments with a faery skill,—
Mute workmen in the mental universe,—
Build palaces that angels may enjoy.
If speech is silver silence is pure gold—
Speech is of time but silence is of God.

Doth not the honey-insect in the dark
With secret effort store its precious gain?
Thought labors in the silence of the night,
And gives to virtue that which virtue grants.

Alas, too often speech is not for truth,
But trippingly is given from the tongue
To hide a doubtful action; and a maze
Of many words may stifle helpful thought.

Be not deceived; speech cannot ever serve
The true communion of two loving souls:
For, as the numbers in a printed list
May specify creations of true art,
Composed by genius for the fortunate,
Not even they,—and not the toiling mass—
Deprived, enraptured vision of those forms,

Are satisfied to quote descriptive terms;—
So, speech may catalog a list of love,
May designate in words transcendent joys,
But leave neglected souls in discontent,
Who, steeped in their misfortune, have not known
That silence breathes the beauty of the heart.

Beware, if in the moments of such dear
Communion, you resist the secret call
That in your breast, insistent and unseen,
Commands your hallowed efforts! You may lose
A greater treasure than the wit of man
Has ever gathered from unfathomed seas;
For so is cast away the secret love
Of an eternal soul, and lost the true
Existence of your own, which not again
May feel the holy calm that silence gives.

Speech is our medium when life is naught—
In the sad moments when we do not wish to know
Or love our brothers, it is used to hide
Our misconceptions, when we feel ourselves
Most insincere, and far away from truth.

And every time we speak, strange feelings warn
That gates divine have closed against our souls—
And so our minds keep avaricious guard
Over a golden silence; but imprudent tongues
Are lavish spenders of their poverty.

A superhuman instinct of the truth,
Has ever warned us it is hazardous
To keep a silent tryst with sordid souls,
Uncared for and not loved; for as the wind
That comes and goes, but leaves no serious trace,
So, words may idly pass from man to man,
But silence, that with subtle motion glides
From heart to soul, may never be forgot.

A life that's beautiful and true —the life
Alone that lives enduringly— is made
Of silence only. In your quiet hours—
When thought may only come— consider then
That silence may give knowlege of itself;
And if your conscious mind an instant may

Descend, deep in your own soul, to that depth
Where angels may inhabit,—over all
The recollections of the one most loved
Are surely not his gestures or his words;
But memory will recall the silent hours
That you and he so long have lived and loved.—
It is the silent moments you have passed,
That can alone reveal the quality
Of your affections, and your soul's desires.

But such is not the passive lassitude
That some mistake for active silence.— We
Are not concerned with futile phantasies,
Or silence in the guise of sleep or death:
An active silence may appear to sleep,
And if quiescent be preferred to speech;
But when some master passion stirs it up,
Then as a king it reigns in royal state.

How often are we forced against our will
Where evil passions reign? When two or three

Have met together they at once conspire
To quell their enemy, invisible;
For many a friendship has no other bond
Than hatred of the silence that should be
The cherished medium of sincere esteem.

But if, in spite of every effort made,
It glides among the vicious, who have met
In purposed folly wickedness to vent,
They will avert their shifting eyes from things
Above their vision: they will slink away
From their unseemly riot—giving place
To that unseen superior:—they will shun
Each other in the future, for the fear
That ribald laughter is a mask to hide
The treachery that lurks on noisy tongues.

The rabble seldom understand its worth;
Yet even they may welcome, at a time
In their misguided lives, that quiet host—
But only when some solemn circumstance

Has opened to their clouded vision scenes
Almost divine. The most depraved may feel
Some moments, during their down-trodden lives
When they may guess what only Gods can know.

Look backward to the day when fearlessly
You first communed with Silence. Solemn thoughts
Were throbbing in your breast. You saw beneath
The clouds, that had enveloped you, a deep
Abysmal valley,—of strange mystery—
And, looking on that inner sea of light,
Or gazing in that chasm of despair,
Your eyes would neither dazzling turn nor flinch.

It was when after weary wandering,
Your footsteps led you home, or at the hour
When you must sever from the ones you love,
Or when a mighty joy exalted you,
Or on the threshold of great misery,
Or in the presence of untimely death.

Consider the blest moments when the jewels,
Unestimated values, were revealed;
Or when the sleeping verities awoke
To sudden rapture; tell me truly, then,
If silence was not like the smile of God?
And if Misfortune followed, — with soft wings
She did not seem to buffet, but with kind
Caresses only kissed the tears away:
At such a moment silence is thrice blest,
And those who suffer from misfortune most
Are they whose hearts are nearest the divine.

They, only, know on what unfathomed seas
The fragile bark of daily life is steered—
Their ways have led them closely unto God;
And when they journey on the shores of light,
Their faithful footprints never shall be lost.

Tremendous in extent, there is no power
To measure it; and whether of the king

Or slave, or in the presence of sad death,
Or grief, or love, it ever is the same.

The secrets of its ways are never lost;
For if the first-born man should meet the last
To dwell upon the earth, its hidden wealth
Would be as adequate and just the same—
And always through the ages.—They would meet
And look in silence—kisses, terrors, tears,
Despite the lapse of uncomputed time,
Would have unchanged effect; and they would know
Each other's inmost souls, as certainly
As those brought up together from their youth
May learn to know and love each other's hearts.

If you should truly wish to give yourself
To some dear friend, or loved one, let your lips
Forget to speak; but if a subtle fear
Unnerves you,—lest that feeling is the sign
Of a compelling love, not satisfied,—
Beware and shun him; rather flee from such

Discordant company; because your heart
Already has been warned of something wrong.

The hour of silence surely comes to us;
It is the sun of love; and as our sun of light
Makes luscious all the healthful fruits of earth,
So, when that silence shines upon our hearts,
It ripens fruits that give immortal joy.

Some mingling must take place—we know
not where—

The fountains of our silence are removed
Far from the streams of reason; for two souls,
Of equal poise and lovable, may clash
In hostile silence, struggling to the death,
Whereas, a virgin and a galley-slave
In dearest harmony, of that great power,
May join their spirits by the purest bond.

It cannot be foreseen, but as the clouds,
That gather without warning in the sky

And send through darkened space quick
 threads of light;
So, spreads, around and hovers over us,
That mystery of silence, out of which
Undreamed of powers may emanate and flow.—
Should that explain why tender lovers wait,
Delaying to the utmost that great day
When that revealer of the hidden life
Must enter their existence, and expel
The clouds of misconceptions, that have held
Their souls so long in duress of dark night?

And even the frivolous are gently led,
By true love, to the center of sweet life;
By which existence shall be worth to them
The value of the Gods, that are enclosed
In their divine first silence; but if they
Should fail to knit their hearts together, when
It beckons unto them, how shall they know
Its wealth and value? It will never change.
It is today the same as yesterday.

The strangest, most unlikely things take place
According to some law, not understood,
Of which no word is spoken, and of which
We do not even think; but deep within
Our hearts a quiet understanding dwells
That must inform us, Silence is the cause.

It is not open to keen arguments;
For every agitation of a soul, alert,
And on its guard, becomes an obstacle
Against the inner life, that is concealed
Within this secret. And to know realities,
This active silence must be rightly used
And not forgotten; for in it shall bloom,
Though seldom, fragrant, unexpected flowers,
Eternal, changeable and variant in form
And color, in accordance with the soul
That blossoms in its own dear nourishment.

Is not the weight of gold and silver found
By balancing in water that is pure?

So, the true value of each spoken word
Is ascertained by the surrounding grace
That radiates from silence.— Let me voice
My love in chosen phrases, it will not
Be valued more than long forgotten words,
That have been babbled in a thousand ways;
But let that silence follow my weak words,
And, if indeed I love, the thought of it
Will sink so deeply to the root of joy,
That life will never equal it again.

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