

Shiloh: A Requiem (April, 1862)

By Herman Melville

Skimming lightly, wheeling still,
 The swallows fly low
Over the field in clouded days,
 The forest-field of Shiloh—
Over the field where April rain
Solaced the parched ones stretched in pain
Through the pause of night
That followed the Sunday fight
 Around the church of Shiloh—
The church so lone, the log-built one,
That echoed to many a parting groan
 And natural prayer
 Of dying foemen mingled there—
Foemen at morn, but friends at eve—
 Fame or country least their care:
(What like a bullet can undeceive!)
 But now they lie low,
While over them the swallows skim,
 And all is hushed at Shiloh.



Although chiefly known for his magisterial novel *Moby-Dick* and for other prose works, Herman Melville was also a fascinating poet who turned to the art after his serious fiction failed to find appreciative readers. His eccentric verse displays the complexity of thought and verbal richness of his novels, which has led some critics to rank him just below Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson among 19th-century American poets.

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