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n Memoriam

The Titanic Disaster

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In Memoriam
The Titanic
Disaster

D. Rea Woodman



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On April the twentieth I had a half hour's conversation with a friend about the "Titanic" disaster. As that conversation was the source and genesis of this sequence of poems, to that friend I offer it, with unchanged fidelity and abiding love.

PART I

I

I Through drear, uninterrupted ages,
Ages uncalendared of fame,
Fettered, companionless, and somber,
Potential only in a name;

Through timeless nights of isolation,
And stunted days of waning sun,
Where eons of pure Polar whiteness
Like snowflakes fall, one beside one;

Where silence gathers till it hardens
To dazzling walls that marge the sea,
And down wide aisles of plastic splendor
The cold builds for eternity;

Through level centuries of silence,
White silence, uninscribed of fame,
Fettered, companionless, and somber,
Potential only in a name;

II Through timeless nights of isolation,
Through stunted, half-reluctant days,
Deep rooted in the level silence,
Powerless in the Polar ways,

An Iceberg brooded, brooded, brooded,
Patient as one who visions far
His dear revenge crowned and completed,
Though earth roll on, a fireless star! —

Brooded, brooded in hate and in shame
That man should drive over the sea,
That even up to the Polar hem
His ships and his conquests should be!

For the sea belongs to the silence,
To the winds, the stars, and the sky!
Shall the masters endure with patience
Man's little ships driving by?

Out upon him, the puny earth-worm,
Who builds ships, and strings them with flame,
And makes the sea carry round the world
His booty, his lovers, his fame!

III Through level centuries of silence,
Where dazzling walls enmarge the sea,
And down wide aisles of plastic splendor
The cold builds for eternity,

The Iceberg brooded, brooded, brooded,
Patient as one who visions far
His dear revenge crowned and completed,
Though earth roll on, a fireless star!

II

"All that wealth and modern workmanship could produce was embodied in the 'Titanic,' the largest vessel ever built, over four city blocks in length. . . . Though with accommodations for a crew of 860 and a passenger capacity of 3,500, she was built with as much care as is put into the finest chronometers."

—ASSOCIATE PRESS DISPATCH.

"Let us build now a ship in defiance
Of the ice and the wind and the wave;
A ship mammoth, all others excelling,
A ship beautiful, confident, brave.
For there is no limit, no boundary
To the power that man yet shall hold
Over the ice and the winds and the waves,
If his dreams be gigantic and bold.

"We have dreamed our dreams till this truth is clear:
The dominion of man o'er the sea
Is only a matter of brains and gold;
As his dreams so his conquests shall be.
Let us build then a ship that shall master
The old terrors of wind and of wave;
A ship superb, mammoth, and excelling,
A ship confident, beautiful, brave.

"For the chiefest creature is Man, The Mind,
And the story is not a third told
Of his command over the sea and sky,
If his dreams be gigantic and bold."

So reasoned the Master Builders, one day,
And they garnered their wisdom and gold,
And fashioned a ship invulnerable,
For their dreams were gigantic and bold.

PART II

III

"It is a night of a thousand stars. The date, Sunday, April 14th, 1912.
The time, 11:20 P.M."

—THE FRA MAGAZINE.

"The night of a thousand stars,"
Cryptic stars,
Isolate stars,
Studding a dome of black velvet, where slow
Coeval grandeurs seem to go
With stoléd footsteps, to and fro,
Like mummers at some shadow-show.

"The night of a thousand stars,"
Cynic stars,
Isolate stars,
Studding the measureless sky of the sea,
In stoic stalls eternally,
Meek to an old-time God decree,
In hopeless kinship, fixed and free.

"The night of a thousand stars,"
Epic stars,
Isolate stars,
Studding the far ebon above the deep,
Too stern for rest, too sad for sleep,
Condemned to watch, yet never weep
The harvest pain their bright eyes reap.

IV

April abroad on the ocean,
The strange and terrible ocean,
The undeclarable ocean,
 Whose mind man can not know;
April abroad, and stars in the sky,
Disassociate stars,
Multitudinous stars,
Exhaustless, mutable, down-gazing stars,
 Whose motives man can not know;
Night on a star-tented ocean,
And April abroad,
Fickle, irresolute April,
Reluctant, light-promising April,
 Whose tenure man can not know;
Stars, and April, and silence,
And windless night,
And the ocean,
The shrugging, terrible ocean,
The undeclarable ocean,
 Whose heart man can not know.

V

A darkling waste of soundless sea,
 A waste of soundless sky;
A coronet of storied light
 Sweeping superbly by!

VI

Oh vague and invidious monster,
Placid as death and as silent,
With the lost, innumerable rainbows
In your echoless bosom pent;

Oh challenged Iceberg from the Arctic,
Rise now to your supreme hour;
For this you have brooded in darkness,
For this, enfolded your power.

Now, rouse from your slumberous scheming,
Lay bare your magnificent breast,
And huge from your vagabond servants
Tower skyward your godlike crest!

For she comes, she comes, your far rival,
Laughing, in unbroken flower,
The ship man has built in defiance,
And gemmed with jubilant power!

Strike now, for your time is upon you;
Call nor wind nor ocean to aid;
Of hatred and sheer human failure
Be this lone, supreme hour made;

An hour of reviling and curses,
While the poor paltry human shrinks,
And deep to a grave of dishonor,
Deflowered, this proud beauty sinks.

One blow, and your work is completed;
 Avenged are your eons of hate;
You have grappled your foe and crushed him
 In his chosen roadways of state.

Then strike, and reclaim your dominion,
 Oh Scourge of the Silentest Sea!
From all trace of man's fairest triumph
 Set the diffident waters free!

VII

"Looming suddenly out of the night, one of Nature's ghostlike seafarers gave the lie to man . . . Man's greatest achievement was no better than a thing of wood and paper before the armament of the North."

—THE NEW YORK JOURNAL.

An uncharted passing at sea;
Nor shot, nor cut, nor blow;
Man's handiwork in contact with
An armament of snow.

A crucial and midnight passing, —
A moment's touch and go;
Man's handiwork belittled by
An armament of snow.

VIII

A scraping sound — and then, sleuth-like,
 Passes a form mast-high;
The ship's pulse falters — rallies — stops:
 "An iceberg!" is the cry.

Silence — and half-broken laughter;
 The iron heart rallies again;
Ice splinters littered upon the decks
 Questioning women and men.

Silence and the shriek of the siren;
 The half-broken laughter dies
Veiled alarms, and the engines laboring
 From below, strange, strangling cries.

No fog; then why the fierce sirens?
 The questioning lips grow white;
"Man the life-boats! Women and children first!"
 The megaphone cleaves the night.

Tumult tendernesses and pity
 Boat after boat over-swung,
And ever frantically into the night
 The screams of the siren flung!

IX

From the startled heavens, the stars cried out,
Like trumpets in a gloom;
“Not here! Not here! Not this at our door!
We never willed this doom!”

From the startled ocean, the deeps cried out,
As hillside cannon boom;
“Not here! Charge not thing to our score!
We all deny this doom!”

And the stars and the deeps together cried,
As in a vacant room;
“We speak the truth, for we dare not lie;
The North Sea ruled this doom!”

PART III

X

"Staggering in an ice field . . . the 'Titanic' sped call after call to the hurrying liners of the upper roads . . . By fits and starts — for the wireless was working unevenly and blurringly — Phillips reached out into the world, crying the 'Titanic's' peril."

—THE NEW YORK CALL.

Out from the ship, in fright,
 Spirit words, creeping
Over the sea, at night,
 Stumbling and leaping;
Out from the ship, in haste,
 Broadcast, a crying,
Over the wireless waste;
 "Help! We are dying!"

Over the waves, a prayer,
 Broken and reeling,
Grasping the empty air,
 Blurred and appealing;
Out from the ship, aghast,
 Far-flung, a crying:
"This is the very last . . .
 Come . . . We are dying . . ."

XI

A floating field of nomad ice,
 Yet — April in the air,
Like a pensive odor stealing,
 Keen, alert, aware;
As far music heard in dreaming
 April in the stricken air!
Quaint adieus, and the endeavor
 Of white-souled despair,
And, tender with all Spring meaning,
 April in the air!

Then unto dying hearts there comes
 The smell of violets, —
The memory of home fields and lanes
 Where the mild wind frets;
And cooing greens, and daffodils
 In wavy coverlets;
Adieus, anguish, and the loving
 That never forgets,
And through the sudden stretch and strain
 The smell of violets!

Oh grudging cold that yet retains
 April in your lost soul,
Where violets and daffodils
 Can make heavy dole!
Oh wishful hearts! Oh cold that keeps
 April in your lost soul!

XII

"There is a world of heroic and tragic significance in the fact that the survivors' stories . . . make no reference whatever to the thirty-five officers of the engineer force . . . In the roll of the saved there is not the name of a single certified engineer . . . The value of the work done by the electrical engineers in keeping the lights going until the last, it is impossible to overestimate."

—THE SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN.

"She's done for, boys, but we'll keep up the lights,"
And not one man demurred,
And the sea, intrushing,
Was all the workmen heard.

"Here we stay, boys. Give 'em light to the last,"
And not one man looked down;
Above, the ship twinkled
From water-line to crown.

"Steady, fellows! . . . Steady, boys! They're dying!"
But no one word was said,
As tangled groans and shrieks
Filtered from overhead.

"Steady, fellows! . . . Give 'em one minute more!"
And not one hero turned,
And on the decks, above,
Three thousand beacons burned!

"One minute more, boys, — one! God, she's sinking . . .
But the Chief's word stood fast,
For the dying vessel
Had light up to the last.

XIII

"The only reply to the distress signals was a counter signal from a large white light which was flashed for nearly two hours from the mast of the 'Californian.'"

—REPORT OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE.

A light! A light!
Phantom, promising, and crescent,
Hectic, gossamer, uncertain,
Yet — a light — surely a light!

Apparition, ghost, or spectre,
Standing sudden in the darkness
Still it dimmers, lingers, wavers,
Hesitating in the darkness
Traitor, savior, or mere goblin
Paltering within death's shadow,
What *is* it that glints the darkness —
Glints the all unanswering darkness?

Hesitating, and yet steadfast;
Phantom still, but still outfacing
Every menace of the darkness,
See, it steadies, grows and beacons —
A light!
Filling every mind with courage,
Lifting every low heart Godward;
Phantom, promising, and crescent,
Hectic, maybe, but now certain —
A light! A light!

Ah blessed Christ, on Galilee,
Were ever souls so moved to see
A savior sight!

XIV

"'Women and children first,' the old, unwritten law of the sea . . . The tradition held rigidly, inflexibly . . . The sea still breeds men who can see their duty and do it."

—THE NEW YORK CALL.

"Man the lifeboats! Women and children first!"

Discipline stern, precise, correct;
And which is peasant and which lady-born
No bitterest eye can detect;
Sleeping babies hurried from hand to hand
With kindest, kingliest care,
With assuring words, or a jest, maybe,
Or a smile, steady, debonair.

Jeweled breasts that mother half-naked waifs,
Asleep in that strange velvet nest;
A ribald command; an answering blow,
A fall — and an officer's jest;
A rush of stokers from the red hell-hole;
Madmen leaping into the sea . . .

"Remember, love!" and a woman sobs out . . .

"Lower away!" A boat swings free.

Curses, muttered threats, torn remnants of prayer;
A woman struggling, tiger-wild;
A dozen clamorous arms keen outstretched
To foster a staring, lost child.

"Lower away." A man leans o'er the rail;
"See you in the morning! Good bye!"
And waves his hat — but in his hounded eyes
A thousand griefs huddle to die.

A lullaby song from linen-white lips
 "Lower away! Room for no more!"
A frantic rabble on the after deck, —
 Fear that shrieks and rolls on the floor!
Cries from the water; thundering commands
 From patient and ghastly seamen;
Snatches of a street song, and the siren
 Yelling above like a demon!

"Good bye, Sweetheart!" with the tenderest touch
 A boat lowered into the night;
A volley of oaths; loud cries upon God;
 A peasant's thin scream of affright!
The smell of cigars, and a laugh somewhere
 A coward shot down where he stands;
Another, and yet another, — then flung
 Overboard by the same firm hands.

"Steady! Lower now!" The last boat swings free;
 The half-smiling men turn away,
And which is peasant and which gentleman
 No bitterest tongue can gainsay.
Slanting decks and a hideous clamor
 Welling up from the icy waves
The listening men climb to the higher deck,
 Among them the silence of graves.

Throttled agonies from the nether dark;
 Lessening clamor from the deep;
The men climb again to another deck
 Where the quiet black waters seep
Standing as if on guard in the silence,
 The black, soundless water breast-high,
Around them, the inexhaustible night,
 Above them, the star-tented sky.

XV

“Row toward that light,” the Captain said,
And he spoke full cheerily,
As from the side of the wounded ship
The little lifeboats swung free.

“Row toward that light,” the Captain said,
And his smile was sweet to see,
As he pointed to a dimming disk
That burned on the bitter sea.

“Straight for that light,” the Captain said,
And “God speed you all !” cried he,
And waved adieu as the last lifeboat
Dropped into the bitter sea.

“God keep you safe,” the Captain said,
And “A stout heart lives !” cried he,
Then leapt adown, as a lover might,
To peace in the bitter sea.

XVI

“ . . . We were drifting for more than four hours before we were picked up.”

—A SURVIVOR'S STORY.

Oh the little rocking boats in the darkness,
 The puzzled, earnest, rocking little boats!
Oh the woman eyes that question the waters
 That rise to hills around the little boats!
Oh the fading Phantom Light in the distance,
 So desired by the rocking little boats, —
Softly blessed in the hearts of all the women,
 The women in the rocking little boats!

Oh the twisting little boats in the valleys,
 The desperate, urgent, nodding little boats!
Oh the woman hearts that break in the silence
 That wraps each swaying valley of the boats!
How they listen, listen, listen the stillness
 That closes in the nodding little boats —
The broken-hearted women in the valleys,
 The valleys of the nodding little boats!

XVII

Imperious Foe from the Northland,
Enguarding the wrack at your feet,
Are these tossing shallops of sorrow
Trophies for a great revenge meet?

Are these huddled women and babies
Foemen worthy your watch and ward? —
Foes strong for the savage black battle
That honors a conqueror's sword?

Tears, and the dull moaning of children —
Be these food for your tempered hate?
Be these the high conquests you carry
On your ermined shoulders of state?

XVIII

"The 'Titanic' went down to her ocean grave without a single witness outside of her own people."

— ASSOCIATE PRESS DISPATCH.

A stretch of sea — mere unlit space
Where waves incessant interlace,
Innumerable, heathen, untaught,
Gold-ridden, but unbowed, unbought;
Half drunken with a freedom old
Ere first was cast the human mold, —
Ere man was born, to dream his hand
Potential on the sea as land! —
A stretch of sea, — a cosmic stage
Where Death and Agony engage
The highest reaches of the clay,
And Irony makes holiday.

Outcast, from the arc of clamor,
Outcast, from the arc of glamour,
As one who looks on noble pain
With naught to share and naught to gain,
The Iceberg holds his victor ground
Though all the deeps are mad with sound! —
Unmoved, hears the children crying;
Unmoved, hears the young ship sighing;
Hears her ragged bandage slipping
Sees her dipping, dipping, dipping
Suspicious lest she feign the end,
Enguards her close, as might a friend.

There, too, beneath his jealous frown,
The little boats go up and down,
Random, as creatures lost to pride;
Docile to every careless tide,
Docile to every new alarm
Of succor, comfort, or of harm;
Docile to new despairs that lie
Crouching within the darkness nigh, —
So ever-watched and sorrow-worn,
So puzzled, frightened, and love-torn,
So pressed by the encroaching gloom
That seems to grudge them dying room !

For vanished is the Canaan Light,
And rayless rolls the neighboring night.
Only before them, dauntless, fair,
Yielding to death nowise his share
Of shrunken lines and livid lip,
She dies herself, the matchless ship !
With every bonny jewel set,
Flame-like, in her doomed coronet;
With every signal taper trim,
And every beacon at its brim,
With song and prayer upon her lip,
She dies herself, the matchless ship !

A stretch of sea — mere unlit space
Where waves incessant interlace, —
A desertness of moving sound,
Unkempt, unsoldiered, and unbound,
Where deeds of midnight horror done
Dimple to rose beneath the sun,
And no man's footstep leaves a stain
Though thrice he die that hold to gain! —
A stretch of sea, — a cosmic stage
Where Death and Agony engage
The highest reaches of the clay,
And Irony makes holiday.

XIX

And the cold !
 The cold !
The miser cold !
The stars are old
With the century cold,
And the mist is dumb,
And the sea in numb
 Like a frozen face !

Oh, the cold !
 The cold !
The drenching, candid, beating cold !
The blood crawls wild
Like a terror-child
 Threading a forest of gloom;
In narrowed eyes,
Paralyzed,
 Fear stands at the door of a horror-room.
Oh the cold,
The grutching cold
 God, the cold !

I When millionaire, peasant, and servant stood,
 Man and man, with the leisure crew,
In a consecrate world, where Times was furled,
 And there remained nothing to do;
When the women were all given over
 To the care of the neutral sea,
And the dimming Light, through the rimming night,
 Seemed fainter and farther to be;

When the chilling breath of the foe crept up
 From the void where the lifeboats strayed,
Like a penitent thing, on furtive wing,
 Convoying a Death once delayed;
When idle they stood on the slanting decks,
 Face to face with the sum of life,
And the leisure hung like a palsied tongue
 Long since done with clatter and strife;

II What were the thoughts of the listening then,
 When Eternity stood anear,
And the human part of each hero heart
 Was rocked with a shadowy fear ?
When the purchased toys of the earth were dust,
 And the Right and the Wrong stood straight,
And the flesh recoil from the soul's high toil
 Seemed a holiday game for Fate;

When the bitterness of surrendered love
 Bowed the spirit upon its throne,
And the strangled Past, in garments aghast,
 In corridors desert made moan !
When the values of life were all leveled,
 Its tawdries and glories all like,
And the palpitant soul, risen and whole,
 Heard somewhere its God-hour strike?

III Ah dear Christ in Heaven, that we might know
 The thoughts of the waiting ones then !—
That on contrite knee, with hearts wide to Thee,
 We might live that hour again !
For life is builded on lust and on gold,
 And the layers of flesh close-knit,
And our dreams of good, though our humanhood,
 Filter tainted and all unfit;
For life is bounded by lust and by gain,
 And rarely the spirit fronts, stark,
For a lengthened space, in an altar place,
 The sea, and the death, and the dark.

XXI

“ . . . When the last faint hope had gone, and the fifteen hundred souls on board waited for death, the eight musicians lined up on the deck. The leader waved his baton . . . and over the ice-laden waters floated the strains of ‘Nearer, my God, to Thee.’ ”

—THE NEW YORK CALL.

Out from the ship that is sinking
To her eternal grave,
Sinking alone, with head unbowed,
So brilliant and so brave,
Suddenly floats a bold music
O'er the death-written sea, —
Music and tenderest singing:
“Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee!”

Wonderful, wonderful music,
Enthralling past belief,
A trumpet-challenge to courage
From the Plateau of Grief!
The death, the horror, the darkness,
The devouring sea,
And yet — that clarion singing:
“Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee!”

The fainting ones, in the water,
The stark and battling nigh,
Listen, and turn their grayed faces
An instant to the sky;
For the moment, life's earth-tenure
Unprecious seems to be;
Soul touches soul, and makes answer:
"E'en though it be a cross
That raiseth me!"

In the lost boats, the poor women
Lift up their hearts, like urns
Cleansed of all dross and bitterness,
Where only sorrow burns;
So freighted with farewell meaning
Across that ice-bound sea,
Are the dear home voices, singing:
"Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee!"

And their hearts are breaking — breaking! —
With pride they can not share;
With quivering lips they listen,
And breathe — and breathe — and bear;
Were these men indeed their lovers
In lands beyond this sea,
These men singing before Death's Gate:
"E'en though it be a cross
That raiseth me!"

Oh noble pain! Oh courage high
That even at the grave
Speaks words of farewell hope and faith
To those it can not save! —
That fain would lift the stricken hearts
On that death-written sea,
And sings, with lofty confidence:
“E’en though it be a cross
That raiseth me!”

Oh noble pain! Oh sacrifice
That level stands with God,
And in the weary, waiting dark
Shrinks not beneath His rod;
That stands before the Final Gate,
Patient, exalted, free,
And proves for every age and time
What love and death may be.

XXII

Oh silent and powerless Braggart,
Is this the reward of your hate ?
They answer, the heroes of midnight,
They answer, from before the Gate.

You are bold in treason and menace,
Gigantic in age-garnered hate,
But doff to the heroes of midnight,
Who stand singing before the Gate.

Forever across the scarred waters,
Swept by your revenge and your hate,
Will echo that clarion music
Of the dying before the Gate.

Oh silent and powerless Braggart,
They conquer your eons of hate;
They conquer, they heroes of midnight,
With their singing before the Gate.

XXIII

"The value of the effects carried by the many wealthy passengers aboard can not be estimated, but in jewels alone, it is believed, a large fortune has gone to the bottom of the ocean."

—ASSOCIATE PRESS DISPATCH.

Most cruelly, Oh most cruelly,
On that night of direful doom,
The jewels that the women so loved
Were dragged to a secret tomb;
Dreaming of fame and of coronels,
Asleep on their satin beds,
Were haled to ghastly and sudden death
With their sins upon their heads! —
Dragged adown smooth steeps of black uproar,
Whence the very stars had died,
And behind closed doors, somewhere, it seemed
As if strangled creatures cried; —

Down, down, and down to a lonely world,
Desperate leagues and leagues below,
Where blind white sea snakes encoil away,
And colorless lilies grow;
Where amethystine shadows curl thin
O'er the rolling coral plains,
Or along the marge of sapphire pools
Drive thickly, like loaded wains;
And ever through the ponderous dusk
Faint memories of motion thrill
And Eternity itself goes wan
In Time so changeless and still.

Poor little gems, what a world for you,
The world down under the sea,
Where never laughter nor music sounds,
And sunshine can never be!

And they loved you so, the fair women
 You knew in the gala world, —
So lovingly kept you from soilure
 On ivory satin curled;
On their tender breasts you were cradled,
 In their warmth, and sweet, and bloom,
Now — rayless and all un beholden,
 You waste in a hidden tomb.

Do you dream of those lovely women
 As you waste in darkness there,
And dreaming, think that you feel, sometimes,
 Coiled masses of shining hair ?
Do you kiss, in thought, with glowing lips,
 Even as you used to do,
The virgin round of a budding breast
 With veins so gentle and blue ?
Or flash again to rich lights that fall
 From oriels of story,
As through cathedral corridors roll
 Anthems of ancient glory ?

Oh futile dreams of beauty and joy —
 Cabined memories of lost light !
Oh priceless jewels for ever more
 Entombed in a thriftless night!
The centuries shall filter like leaves
 That mold on the tranquil lea,
The fierce gulls bicker above the waves,
 The stars look down on the sea,
But for ever more, for ever more,
 Deathless in your blinded bloom,
You shall dream the dreams of light denied
 In a lost and secret tomb.

PART IV

XXIV

Unrifted blackness, unrifted silence;
Gone, the Canaan Light;
Sprinkled like star seedlings over the wave
Wide eyes, terror-bright;
Fellowless, on the floor of the ocean,
The blind ship lies still,
And from realms indeterminate, brute Death
Drinks his mighty fill.

XXV

"... The 'Carpathia' was the first of the relief ships to arrive
When the 'Carpathia' got to the scene, at daybreak, she found only
boats and wreckage."

—ASSOCIATE PRESS DISPATCH.

The East, new-moccasined with dawn,
Now walks upon the sea,
And every waking wave breaks red
Beneath his subtle, noiseless tread,
And wide his Orient blessings fall,
So prodigal, so prodigal!

And sad upon the sunrise sea,
Where walks the East
So lavishly,
Ignoring, in his spendthrift mood,
In his fresh, creant plentitude,
The laggard ice that all defies
The power of his friendly eyes; —
Sad, sad upon the dimpling sea,
The leavings of Death's midnight rout,
With negligence, are strewn about;
Broken oddments, engemmed with light,
With scintillant, triumphant light,
That mingle with the sunrise sea
So jocundly, so jocundly!

And sadder, on the sunrise sea,
Where walks the East
So lavishly,
Mute in the path of quick'ning gold,
With every bead of faith long told,
Some shivering little lifeboats wait,
Like beggars spent, at Morning's Gate

And now across the sunrise sea,
All hopefully, all hopefully,
The Hero Ship speeds her brave way
Close on the footsteps of the day!
“Thank God! Thank God!” and starved tears fall
So prodigal, so prodigal!

XXVI

“ . . . The suspense of the waiting thousands here in the city (New York) for any scrap of news is hardly to be endured, but as yet no hint of the disaster has been gleaned from the troubled air.”

—THE NEW YORK CALL.

Hope's outliers fade against grief's sky;
Mansioned in despair
The City waits in faith to read
The arcane of the folded air.

XXVII

"The 'Carpathia', which is slowly making its way to New York, having
aboard eight hundred survivors, will probably arrive late Thursday night."

—ASSOCIATE PRESS DISPATCH.

Oh Savior Ship, o'er the homing waters,
As a bird to her nest, Oh Comrade One!
Never a vessel with prow so steadfast,
With keel so responsive, under the sun!

Oh Hero Ship, o'er the homing waters,
We wait your coming, Samaritan Heart,
Who heard in the midnight a crying, and turned,
And groped in the dark, and would not depart.

Steadily, over the homing waters,
Oh Savior Ship, bring the rescued^a you bear;
Our tears have new channels of pity.
Our lifted hearts have compassion to share.

By the sweet, homing waters we're waiting,
Samaritan Heart of the Midnight Sea,
And Oh, may the staunchless tears that fall down
In silence, with silence best honor thee.



XXVIII

"The cable-ship, 'Mackay-Bennett', has been dispatched to the scene of the 'Titanic' disaster to search for bodies."

—ASSOCIATE PRESS DISPATCH.

Wide, wide, the funeral waters flow,
Wide, wide, the waves death-dappled go,
A wildness of enrolling green,
Stabbed with white faces, set, serene;
Where pilgrim ice grinds stolid by,
Sullen, under the April sky,
And flotsam from a new-made grave
Haggles for place with wind and wave;
A mongrel field of wastrel woe,
Where wide the funeral waters flow.

Wide where the funeral waters flow,
And dancing waves death-dappled go,
With every floating banner shed,
And every waiting cerecloth spread,
The Coffin Ship patrols the sea
For driftwood dead that yet may be, —
With loving care too late to save
Courses above that martyr grave.
With cautious keel, wary, intent,
Her earnest gazing downward bent;
Across the mournful miles of waste,
Without impatience, without haste, —
Across the mournful miles, then back,
Then doubling on the trodden track,
Revengeless, noble, plodding, slow,
Where wide the funeral waters flow.

Wide where the funeral waters flow,
Wide where the faces come and go,
Through rummage roads that know no rest
The Coffin Ship holds on her quest;
Halting, listening, creeping, veering,
Driving, tacking, crouching, sheering
Lifting, lifting gaunt huddled flecks
Piling, piling, on housel decks
Where wide the waves death-dappled go,
Where wide the funeral waters flow.

XXIX

"Halifax, April 30th. As the 'Mackay-Bennett' slowly steamed up the three and a half miles of harbor, the bells of the churches tolled at minute intervals, and the flags on every building in the city were at half mast."

—ASSOCIATE PRESS DISPATCH.

I Toll tenderly, toll tenderly,
You thousand mourning bells!
Toll tenderly across the Bay,
Where slow the Coffin Ship makes way.

Quietly, with altered features,
Sadly waits the seaside city;
Down her cheeks the tears flow freely,
Broken is her heart with pity;
(Toll tenderly, toll tenderly!)
In her kindly hands, the spices
With foreign fragrance fill the air,
And the lilies, and the linens
In straightened folds, seamless and fair; —

Grave-clothes fresh and scant and simple,
All humble-proud in meek array;
Lilies frail that seem to proffer
Solace in their most lovely way;
(Toll tenderly, toll tenderly!)
Girded for her honored duty,
Sadly waits the seaside city;
In her hands, her funeral labors,
And her heart broken with pity.

II Fall slenderly, fall slenderly,
 You thousand mourning flags!
Fall slenderly against the sky
While slow the dead are carried by.

Down the cypress streets of sorrow,
Down avenues aligned with prayer,
Tempest-beaten, shapeless, seaworn,
The rescued dead are borne with care
 (Fall slenderly, fall slenderly !)
Gently, through the laureled longing,
Beneath the unremembering sun,
Borne beyond the city's portal,
The driftwood dead the land has won;

Gently, lingeringly lowered
Deeply into the steadfast ground,
While the pleasant April weather
With healing seems to film the sound;
 (Fall slenderly, fall slenderly !)
Down the tolling streets of sorrow,
Down avenues aligned with prayer,
Tempest-beaten, shapeless, seaworn,
The driftwood dead are borne with care.

XXX

Oh gleaming, implacable giant,
 Be these the vast wrecks of your hate?
Be these the high triumphs you carry
 On your loftly shoulders of state? —

These discolored fragments and twistings,
 Raked like rubbish from off the sea?
Answer, Oh you Monarch of Terrors,
 Are these a majestic trophy?

XXXI

"The Committee is forced to the inevitable conclusion that the 'Californian' . . . saw the distress signals of the 'Titanic', and failed to respond to them."

—THE ENGLISH COMMISSIONER'S REPORT.

As a wounded ship lay in the Roads one night,
(Harken the story of the Ocean Levite !)
A stranger, passing, dimly beheld the sight,
Paused, listened, looked again, lit a careful light,
Shivered, — for the Roads were ice-blocked and wide,
(Hard, hard is the tale on the seaman's pride !)
Reckoned the cost,
Then turned, and passed by on the other side.

(Herein all true men that love mercy and right
May harken the story of The Phantom Light,
Which same is the tale of the Ocean Levite.)

"No estimate can be made of the number of dead that drifted seaward . . . Such bodies will, in all probability, never be recovered."

—ASSOCIATE PRESS DISPATCH.

They are drifting, drifting, drifting,
Where the lank seaweed is lifting,
On the wild and hermit waters,
On the rough and wayward waters,
On the lonely prairie waters
That roll beyond the ships' highway.

They are broken, broken, broken,
Human by no sign or token,
Fellowed by the sheering seagulls,
By the bickering, shrill seagulls,
By the dreadful dipping seagulls
That feast beyond the ships' highway.

They are tossing, tossing, tossing,
Where the gray sea-beasts are crossing,
The low-browed, primeval sea-beasts,
The utterest abhorrent sea-beasts,
The huge, hunger-hounded sea-beasts
That range beyond the ships' highway.

They are broken, broken, broken,
Human by no sign or token,
Lost forever to the couches,
To the dim and dreamless couches,
The uncloven coral couches
That lie beneath the ships' highway.

XXXIII

Down where the constant corals bloom,
And wild the silence ebbs to sound,
In deeps of uninvaded room,
The selfish sea above, around;
Down where the purple shadows crowd,
Remorseless, somber, vague, alone,
Bereft of cerement, flag, or shroud,
Bereft of bell or burial stone;

Down where the constant corals grow,
And errant shallows lightly lave,
It lies where idle currents flow
From ocean reef to ocean cave;
Guarded in all its leisure wide
By leagues on leagues of turquoise rest,
The tomb the nations mourn with pride,
The grave the peoples love the best.

Oh hero hearts that waste away
In caves where man has never trod,
Who can not know the sun's warm ray,
Nor comfort of the greening sod;
O'er whom our church bells can not toll,
Our meadows spread their brightest bloom,
Nor grand the organ requiem roll
A down their vast and riven tomb.

Oh gallant grave! Oh grief that flows
Forever onward with the dead,
And softly, as the coral grows,
Twines unseen cypress round their bed! —

Softly, through the gathering sorrow
Of twilight years that yet may be,
Dim discerns the dear Tomorrow
When faith shall reap the yielding sea.

Oh selfish sea that moans around
The exalt dead you can not know,
In honor guard the alien ground
Where tall their tombs of coral grow;
In honor keep the shallows pure
That round their sacredness wait,
And through the years, supreme, secure,
Hold that lost grave inviolate.

Oh gallant grave! Oh grief that flows
Forever onward with the dead,
And softly, as the coral grows,
Twines unseen cypress round their bed!

XXXIV

"Manchester, England, May 18th. The funeral services of Walter Hartley, leader of the 'Titanic' band, who went to his death valiantly leading his musicians to the end, were held today. Thirty thousand people followed his remains to the little chapel in the nearby village of Colne . . . a homage that could not have been greater had the dead musician been of royal blood."

—ASSOCIATE PRESS DISPATCH.

English meadows, winsome, beaming,
English meadows roofed with May,
With buttercups, daisies and clover springing,
With swallow and white-throat and chaffinch winging, —
Orient seas where the merchant bees
Traffic the long shining day;

By the tranquil meadows winding,
Winding, winding down,
People follow, follow, follow,
From the throbbing town;
Quite forgetful of the clover,
Of the buttercups and daisies,
Heeding not the white-throat winging,
Nor the chaffinch singing, singing,
Still they follow, follow, follow,
From the throbbing town,
Past the tranquil, winsome meadows,
Winding, winding down
Endless is the passing, passing
An ebon chain of woe,
Through abundant aisles of May-tide
All England seems to go.

Not to a famous place they follow;
Not to a cathedral tomb,
Where mural histories, gold and gaud,
Emparadise the gloom;
Not to companion counselors
Do they bear hence their dead, —
To rest with poet, priest, and king,
In the bleak halls where death's footfalls
With less assurance seem to ring;
Where Fame is rooted from of eld,
And moveless marbles aye upheld
O'er abbey altars dim;
Ah no; past English meadows
The commons follow him;
Where the buttercups are springing,
Where the swallows low are winging,
Between hedgerows bossed with bloom,
The people follow, follow, follow
To a village tomb.

Soldier, statesman, priest, or poet,
Hakim, potentate, or king —
None of these the dead they follow
Through the cadences of Spring;
Nor cabinet hall nor Senate heard
His strength outpoured in thunder-word;
No brooding fields o'er shrank to see
His lines of driven peasantry
With shoutings stab and kill,
Himself, the Viceroy of Death,
Commanding from a crimsoned hill!

Only a player of music was he,
But his soul was brave as a soul can be,
And now, past English meadows,
Their loving hearts abrim,
Through the cadences of Spring,
The commons follow him.

Only a player of music was he,
But never a man on battle sod
With a finer courage faced his God;
No pulsing wounds half crazed his spirit;
No distant Honor cry —
The glory lust that enables a man
With nonchalance to die;
Patience, suspense, hopeless hopes deferred,
Waiting, waiting 'til the soul blanched white —
'Gainst these things he lined up his players
On a slanting deck, one night;
Only a player of music,
With the soul of a meadow lark,
Leading his dying bandsmen
On a slanting deck, in the dark,
But now, to honor him,
An endless chain of woe,
Through abundant aisles of May-tide,
All England seems to go.

XXXV

Impregnable Foe from the Arctic,
 Drift on the uttermost sea!
On unfoughten deserts of ocean
 The wrecks of your menace let be;

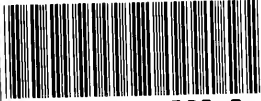
Insult the frail ships with your beauty,
 Strike fierce with your dull hidden hate;
Serene from the innocent waters
 Lift grandly your shoulders of state;

Summon your white powers of terror
 To garner the havoc you crave,
But sore in your memory shall rankle
 The thought of that triumphant grave;

How bitter soever your scourging
 Of the man-driven sea you hate,
For aye shall you hear the bold music
 Of the dying before the Gate;

How bitter soever the knowing,
 It shall come or early or late:
Your vengeance was robbed of its potency
 By that singing before the Gate.

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