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SHIPS AND FOLKS

BY
C. FOX SMITH



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ELKIN MATHEWS, CORK STREET
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Ships and Folks

*“Ships are like folks”—said Murphy—“the way there’s
good an’ bad*

*An’ weak an’ strong among ’em, an’ steady ones an’ mad,—
The way they’re wild an’ willing, an’ kind an’ cruel too,
The way there’s fair and false ones, an’ homely ones an’ true.*

*“Ships are like folks”—said Murphy—“the way a man can’t
tell*

*What makes him fancy one so, an’ hate the next like hell,
Why some that treat him handsome he counts no more’n the
rest,
An’ them that use him hardest, it’s them he’ll like the best.*

*“Ships are like folks”—said Murphy—“the way they come
an’ go,*

*An’ some you’ll sail for years with an’ never seem to
know . . .*

*An’ some you’ll sign just once with, an’ part, an’ there’s an
end . . .*

*An’ some you’ll first clap eyes on an’ know you’ve found a
friend.*

*“Ships are like folks”—said Murphy—“in every kind o’
way—*

*The way us fellers leave ’em that’s knowed ’em in their day—
The way we’ll chuck the best ones an’ choose the worst in-
stead—*

*An’ curse ’em when they’re livin’—an’ miss ’em when they’re
dead.”*

Missing

I

SHE was spoken off Saint Vincent, outward bound . . .
Some lumber-laden barque from Puget Sound,
Heaving her sodden deck-load through the foam,
Weary of sea-ways, climbing the hill for home . . .
Some nine-knot tramp from Melbourne or Bombay,
Wallowing deep-freighted on her homeward way,
Her grimy decks awash, her blistered funnel
Leprous with salt, sea-stained from keel to gunwale,
Rust-streaked, and battered with the Cape Horn gales,
Sighted at grey of dawn her shining sails . . .
White as a woman's breasts they gleamed afar,—
Her gilded main-truck flashing like a star,—
And the first shafts of sunrise turned to gold
Her sleek side, heaving upward as she rolled . . .
So passed she by—and those who watched her go
Thought of that road they had good cause to know,
Thought how, when they were sheltered dry and warm,
She would go plunging through some night of storm,
All hands aloft, reefing the steel-hard sails,
Cursing . . . with frozen hands and bleeding nails . . .
Her yards sheeted with ice . . . her leaning deck
A seething flood men toiled in to the neck . . .
Then thought of winking glasses, warmth and noise—
Good pay to burn—and sordid seaport joys—
Saying: "Who'd change with them chaps now?"—and
yet
Still felt a strange half-envy, half-regret,
Such as men may who, ease and wealth attained,

And their full measure of good fortune gained,
 From the safe harbour of their middle years
 Look back on youth, its burning hopes and fears,
 Its unattempted capes and unsailed sea,
 Landfalls unguessed, and all things yet to be,
 Fond dreams, fantastic loves, and dark despair,—
 Know it for ever fled—know it was fair . . .
 So passed she by—her tall masts swaying, singing,
 Sailors (mere specks) on dizzy foot-ropes swinging,
 Whence, looking down, they saw beneath them
 spread

All her slim length from stern to fo'c'sle head,
 The cleft wave streaming from her wedge of bow,
 Where the carved warrior with his casqued brow
 Leaned always out over the sea's unrest,
 With arms laid crosswise on his mailed breast,
 And eyes that, all unseeing, seemed to gaze
 Out to the ultimate end of all men's ways . . .
 Passed . . . till hull down on the horizon's rim,
 Her lonely beauty lessened and grew dim . . .
 Passed . . . like a song unfinished, a broken
 rhyme . . .

And the sea's silence took her for all time.

II

She will not come . . . oh, never, never more
 Shall she draw near to any earthly shore ;
 In storm or calm—in foul weather or fine—
 Fast-hurrying wrack or watery pale sunshine—
 Frost when the jackstay burns the naked hand—
 Odours of forests blowing off the land—
 Chill driving mist, or roar of tropic rain—
 Dawn, noontide, sunset, dark . . . never again !

No more at sunrise, all the winds at rest,
The sea rose-dappled like a pigeon's breast,
Shall her black tug—a dwarf leading a queen—
Bring her the lighthouse-guarded strait between. . . .
No more, when folk ashore begin to stir,
And wood-smoke hangs on the sharp morning air,
Her sailormen, tramping the capstan round,
Shall wake the sleeping anchorage with sound—
Lifting some wild sea shanty of old time,
Some ancient strain wedded to rough old rhyme—
“Lowlands away” or “Rio Grande”—unheard
Each trivial phrase, each vile and worthless word,
Only the strange wild cadences remaining,
Full of the sea's voice and the wind's complaining,
The sad old wistful melody that seems
The stuff of old men's memories, young men's dreams. . . .
No more for her along the anchored tiers
Shall all the shipping ripple into cheers
Of welcome or farewell . . . no more again
On any tide her restless cables strain . . .
Nor any landlocked roadstead more behold
Her mirrored pride . . . no harbour see her fold—
After long wanderings come at last to shore—
Her weary wings at sunset any more . . .
Never again to any foul lagoon
Or fetid river in the reek of noon,
Or any lone teredo-fretted quay
Where pine-clothed ranges echo all the day
The crash of falling forests . . . bustling hong,
Or small white Spanish town its palms among . . .
Or where the gleaming Andes hold on high
Their spears in challenge to the sunset sky . . .
To any port of all the ports there be
Shall she come with her beauty from the sea.

III

Aye, all that grace and beauty, strength and speed—
All that she was—are now no more indeed—
Ropes, hard and hairy as a seaman's hand—
Planking, scoured white as bone with stone and sand—
Fife-rails with staunch belaying-pins arow—
And racks of capstan bars—and sails like snow—
And standing rigging gleaming black and white—
Clean smells of tar and paint—and brasses bright
As gold in the sun—and darkly shining teak . . .
That little ordered world, austere and bleak
As some bare chapel of a monkish creed
That asks not pomp nor pride for its soul's need . . .
No more, that strength, that swiftness and that grace,
Than one blown foam-flake on the ocean's face—
No more than one of all the million bubbles
Beneath some proud ship's forefoot, when she troubles
The tumbled whites and blues of tropic seas
A little, and is gone—no more than these,
Less than the least small shell the ocean sweeps
Through winds and waves and unimagined deeps,
Far from the warmth of blue West Indian seas,
And gaudy parrots screaming through the trees,
Hot tropic smells, and fireflies, and the song
Of Trade winds in the palm-trees all day long,
To the cool greys and blues of temperate skies,
Cold tide-left pools, and the strange sea-birds' cries,
And the pink sea-thrift on the headlands blooming,
And in the hollow caves the Atlantic booming.

IV

Where rests she now? . . . On what Antarctic shore
Where nothing grows but lichens, grey and hoar

As the pale lips of death . . . and nothing moves
On the long beaches, in the deep sea-coves,
But uncouth sea-beasts in their secret, strange
Matings and breedings . . . nothing seems to change
Year by slow year . . . and the fog comes, and the floe,
And the sea thunders, and the great winds blow . . .
And on still wings great birds go sailing by,
Seeking, with slantwise head and watchful eye,
Scraps for their naked nestlings . . . and the time
Comes, and the time goes, and the ocean slime
Coats her with foulness, and the seaweeds green
Clothe her, whom once men tended like a queen. . . .

Let be! . . . She is one with all things that have
been—

Embers of longing—ashes of desire—
And hope grown cold—and passion quenched like fire—
Friendship that death or years or the rough ways
Of chance have sundered . . . all things meet for praise,
Lost yet remembered, that were ours of yore—
Things lovely and beloved, that are no more. . . .

The Packet Rat

WHEN I leave this Western Ocean, to the South'ard
I will steer,
In a tall Colonial clipper far an' far enough from
here,
Down the Channel on a bowline—through the
Tropics runnin' free—
When I've done wi' the Western Ocean—an' when
it's done wi' me!

An' I'll run my ship in Sydney, an' then I'll work my
way
To them smilin' South Seas islands where there's
sunshine all the day,
An' I'll sell my chest an' gear there, as soon's I hit
the shore,
An' sling away my last discharge, an' go to sea no
more.

It's a pleasant time they have there—they've easy,
quiet lives—
They wear no clo'es to speak on—they've a bunch
o' browney wives;
An' they're bathing all the day long, or baskin' on
the sand,
All along wi' them Kanakas, as naked as your hand.

An' I'll lay there in the palm shade, an' take my
ease all day,
An' look across the harbour to the shippin' in the
bay,

An' watch the workin' sailormen . . . the bloomin'
same as me,
In the workin' Western Ocean, afore I left the sea.

I'll hear 'em at the capstan bars, a-heavin' good and
hard ;
I'll hear 'em tallyin' on the fall, an' sweatin' up the
yard,
Hear 'em lift a halliard shanty—hear the bosun
swear an' shout,
An' the thrashin' o' the headsheets as the vessel
goes about.

An' if the fancy takes me—as it's like enough it
may—
Just to smell the old ship smells again, an' taste the
salt an' spray,
I can take a spell o' pearlin' or a tradin' trip or two
Where it's none but golden weather an' a sky that's
always blue.

But I'll do no sailorisin' jobs . . . I'll walk or lay at
ease,
Like a blessed packet captain just as lordly as you
please,
With a steward for my table an' a boy to bring my
beer,
An' a score or two Kanakas for to reef an' furl an'
steer.

An' when I'm tired o' cruisin' up an' down an' here
an' there,
There'll be kind Kanaka women wi' the red flowers
in their hair,

All a-waitin' there to welcome me when I come in
from sea,
When I've done wi' this 'ere ocean . . . but that'll
never be.

For I'd hear the parrots screamin', an' the palm-trees'
drowsy tune,
But I'd want the Banks in winter, an' the smell of
ice in June,
An' the hard-case mates a-bawlin', an' the strikin' o'
the bell,
God! I've cursed it oft an' cruel . . . but I miss it
all like hell!

Yes, I'd want the Western Ocean where the packets
come an' go,
An' the grey gulls wheelin', callin', an' the grey skies
hangin' low,
An' the blessed lights o' Liverpool a-winkin' in the
rain
For to welcome us poor packet rats come back to
port again.

An' if I took and died out there, my soul 'ud never
stay
In them sunny Southern latitudes to wait the Judg-
ment Day,
All across the seas from England I should hear the
old life call,
An' the bloomin' Western Ocean, it'd get me after
all.

I'd go flyin' like a seagull, as they say dead shell-
backs do,
For to see the ships I sailed in an' the shipmates
that I knew,
An' the tough old North Atlantic where the winds
do always blow,
An' the Western Ocean packets all a-flyin' to an'
fro.

An' I'd leave the Trades behind me, an' I'd leave the
Southern Cross,
An' the mollymawks an' flyin' fish an' stately
albatross,
An' I'd steer through wind an' weather an' the sea-
fogs white as wool,
Till I sighted old Point Lynas an' the Port o'
Liverpool.

Then I'd fly to some flash packet when the hands was
bendin' sail,
An' I'd set up on the main-truck doin' out my wings
an' tail,
An' I'd see the tug alongside, an' the Peter flyin'
free,
An' the pilot come aboard her for to take her out to
sea.

An' I'd follow down to Fastnet light, an' then I'd
hang around
There to watch 'em out to Westward an' to greet
'em homeward bound . . .
For I know it's easy talkin'—an' I know when all is
said,
It's the bloomin' Western Ocean what'll get me when
I'm dead!

Words of Wisdom

“COME all you young seamen, take heed now to me,
A hard-case old sailorman bred to the sea,
As had sailed the seas over afore you was born,
And learned 'em by heart from the Hook to the
Horn . . .

Don't hold by the ratlines when going aloft,
(Which I've told you afore, but can't tell you too oft),
Or you'll strike one that's rotten as sure as you live,
And it's too late to learn when you've once felt it
give;

If you don't hit the bulwarks, you'll sure hit the
sea—

For them rotten ratlines—they're the devil,” says he.

“Now if you should see, as you like enough may,
When tramping the docks for a ship some fine day,
A spanking full-rigger just ready for sea,
And think she looks all that a hooker should be . . .
Take heed you don't ship with a skipper that
drinks—

You'd better by half play at fan-tan with Chinks!
For that stands for nothing but muddle and mess—
It may mean much more and it can't mean much
less—

What with wrangling and jangling to drive a man
daft,

And rank bad dis-cip-line both forrard and aft,
A ship that's ill-found and a crew out of hand,
It's a touch-and-go chance she may never reach land,

But sink in a gale or broach to in a sea,
For them drunken skippers—they're the devil," says
he.

"And if you go further and pause to admire
A ship that's as neat as your heart could desire,
As smart as a frigate aloft and alow,
Her brasswork like gold and her planking like
snow . . .

Look round for a mate by whose twang it is plain
That his home port is somewhere round Boston or
Maine,

With a jaw that's the cut of a square block of wood,
And . . . beat it, my son, while the going is good!
It's scouring and scraping from morning till night
To keep that brass shiny and keep them decks white,
And belaying-pin soup both for dinner and tea,
For them smart down-easters—they're the devil,"
says he.

"But if by good fortune you chance for to get
A ship that ain't hungry, or wicked, or wet,
That answers her hellum both a-weather and lee,
Sails well on a bowline, and well running free . . .
A skipper that's neither a fool nor a brute,
And mates not *too* free with the toe of their boot . . .
A 'Sails' and a bosun not new to the trade,
And a 'Slush' with a notion how vittles is made,
And a crowd that ain't half of 'em Dagoes or Dutch,
Or Mexican greasers, or niggers, or such,
You stick to her close as you would to your wife—
She's the sort that you only find once in your life—
And ships is like women—you take it from me
That if they *are* bad uns, they're the devil," says he.

The Three Ships

I HAD tramped along through dockland till the day was
all but spent,
But for all the ships I there did find I could not be
content :
By the good pull-ups for carmen and the Chinese dives
I passed,
And the streets of grimy houses each one grimier than
the last,
And the shops whose shoddy oilskins many a sailorman
has cursed
In the wintry Western Ocean when it's weather of the
worst . . .
All among the noisy graving docks and waterside
saloons,
And the pubs with punk pianos grinding out their last
year's tunes,
And the rattle of the winches handling freight from
near and far,
And the whiffs of oil and engines, and the smells of
bilge and tar,
And of all the craft I came across, the finest for to see
Was a dandy ocean liner . . . but she wasn't meant
for me !
She was smart as any lady, and the place was fair alive
With the swarms of cooks and waiters, just like bees
about a hive ;
It was nigh her time for sailing, and a man could hardly
stir
For the piles of rich folks' dunnage here and there and
everywhere ;

And the stewards and the awnings and the white paint
and the gold

Take a deal of living up to for a chap that's getting
old,

And the mailboat life's a fine one . . . but a shellback
likes to be

Where he feels a kind o' homelike after half his life at
sea. . . .

So I sighed and passed her by—"Fare you
well, my dear," said I,

"You're as smart and you're as dainty as
can be,

You're a lady through and through, but I know
it wouldn't do—

You're a bit too much a rich man's gal for
me!"

So I rambled on through dockland, but I couldn't
seem to find

Out of all the craft I saw there just the one to please
my mind ;

There were tramps and there were tankers, there were
freighters large and small,

There were concrete ships and standard ships and motor
ships and all,

And of all the blessed shooting-match the one I liked
the best

Was a saucy topsail schooner from some harbour in the
West.

She was neat and she was pretty as a country lass
should be,

And the girl's name on her counter seemed to suit her
to a T ;

You could almost smell the roses, almost see the red
and green
Of the Devon plough and pasture where her home port
must have been,
And I'll swear her blocks were creaking in a kind of
Devon drawl—
Oh, she took my fancy rarely—but I left her after all!
For it's well enough, is coasting, when the summer days
are long,
And the summer hours slip by you just as sweetly as a
song,
When you catch the scent of clover blowing to you off
the shore,
And there's scarce a ripple breaking from the Land's
End to the Nore;
But I like a bit more sea-room when the short dark
days come in,
And the Channel gales and sea-fogs and the nights as
black as sin,
When you're groping in a fairway that's as crowded as
a town
With the whole damned Channel traffic looking out to
run you down,
Or a bloody lee-shore's waiting with its fierce and
foaming lips
For the bones of poor drowned sailormen and broken
ribs of ships. . . .

So I sighed and shook my head—"Fare you
well, my dear," I said,

"You're a bit too fond of soundings, lass,
for me,

Oh, you're Devon's own dear daughter—but
my fancy's for deep water,

And I think I'll set a course for open sea!"

So I tramped along through dockland, through the Isle
of Dogs I went,
But for all the ships I found there still I could not be
content . . .
Till not far from Millwall Basin, in a dingy, dreary
pond,
Mouldy wharf-sheds all around it and a breaker's yard
beyond
With its piles of rusty anchors and chain-cables large
and small,
Broken bones of ships forgotten—there I found her
after all.
She was foul from West Coast harbours, she was worn
with wind and tide,
There was paint on all the bright work that was once
her captain's pride,
And her gear was like a junk-store, and her decks a
shame to see,
And her shrouds they wanted rattling down as badly
as could be . . .
But she lay there on the water just as graceful as a
gull,
Keeping some old builder's secret in her strong and
slender hull;
By her splendid sweep of sheer-line and her keen,
clean clipper bow
You might know she'd been a beauty . . . and by God,
she was one now!
And the river gulls were crying, and the sluggish river
tide
Made a kind of running whisper by her red and rusted
side,
And the river breeze came murmuring her tattered
gear among,

Like some old shellback, known of old, that sings a
sailor's song—

That whistles through his yellowed teeth an old deep-
water tune

(The same did make the windows shake in the
Boomerang Saloon!),

Or by the steersman's elbow stays to tell a seaman's
tale

About the skippers and the crews in great old days of
sail.

And I said: "My dear, although you are
growing old, I know,

And as crazy and as cranky as can be . . .

If you'll take me for your lover, oh, we'll sail
the wide seas over,

You're the ship among them all that's meant
for me!"

The Rhyme of the *Rio Grande*

By Salthouse Dock as I did pass one day not long ago,
I chanced to meet a sailorman that once I used to know ;
His eye it had a roving gleam, his step was light and gay,
He looked like one just in from sea to blow a nine
months' pay.

And as he passed athwart my hawse he hailed me long
and loud :

“ Oh, find me now a full saloon where I may stand the
crowd :

I'm out to rouse the town this night, as any man may be
That's just come off a salvage job, my lad, the same as
me—

“ Bringin' home the *Rio Grande*, her as used to be
Crack o' Moore, Mackellar's line, back in ninety-
three,—

First of all the 'Frisco fleet home in ninety-eight,
Ninety days to Carrick Roads from the Golden
Gate ;

Thirty shellbacks used to have all their work to do
Haulin' them big yards of hers, heavin' of her to
Down off Dago Ramirez, where the big winds
blow,

Bringin' home the *Rio Grande* twenty years
ago !

“ We picked her up one morning, homeward bound from
Pqrtland, Maine,

In a nine-knot gruntin' cargo tramp by name the *Crown*
o' *Spain*.

The day was breakin' cold and dark and dirty as could
be,

It was blowing up for weather, as we couldn't help but
see.

Her crew was gone the Lord knows where—and Fritz
had left her too,

He must have took a scare and left afore his job was
through;

We tried to pass a hawser, but it warn't no kind o'
good,

So we put a salvage crew aboard, to save her if we
could—

“Bringin' home the *Rio Grande* and her freight
as well,

Half-a-score o' steamboatmen cursin' her like
hell,

Floundering in the flooded waist, scramblin' for a
hold,

Hanging on with teeth and toes, dippin' when
she rolled;

Ginger Dan the donkeyman, Joe the doctor's
mate,

Loafers off the water-front, greasers from the
Plate,

That's the sort of crowd we had to reef and steer
and haul—

Bringin' home the *Rio Grande*, ship and freight
and all.

“Our mate had served his time in sail, he was a bully
boy,

It'd wake a corpse to hear him hail 'Foretopsail yard
ahoy!' ”

He knew the ways of squaresail and he knew the way
 to swear,
 He'd got the habit of it here and there and everywhere ;
 He'd some samples from the Baltic and some more
 from Mozambique,
 Chinook and Chink and double-Dutch and Mexican
 and Greek,
 He'd a word or two in Russian, but he learned the best
 he'd got
 Off a pious preachin' skipper—and he had to use the
 lot—

“Bringin' home the *Rio Grande* in a seven days'
 gale,
 Seven days and seven nights, the same as Jonah's
 whale,
 Standard compass gone to bits, steering all
 adrift,
 Courses split and mainmast sprung, cargo on the
 shift,
 Not a chart in all the ship left to steer her by—
 Not a glimpse of star or sun in the bloomin'
 sky . . .
 Two men at the jury wheel, kickin' like a mule,
 Bringin' home the *Rio Grande* up to Liverpool.

“The seventh day off South Stack Light the sun begun
 to shine ;
 Up come an Admiralty tug and offered us a line ;
 The mate he took the megaphone and leaned across
 the rail,
 And this, or something like it, was the answer to their
 hail :

He'd take it very kindly if they'd tell us where we
were,
And he hoped the war was going well, he'd got a
brother there,
And he'd thought about their offer, and he thanked
them kindly too,
But since we'd brought her up so far, by God, we'd see
it through—

“ Bringin' home the *Rio Grande*—and we done it
too!
Courses split and mainmast sprung—half-a-watch
for crew—
Bringin' home the *Rio Grande* and her freight as
well—
Half-a-score of steamboatmen cursing her like
hell—
Her as led the grain fleet home back in ninety-
eight—
Ninety days to Carrick Roads from the Golden
Gate—
Half-a-score of steamboatmen to reef and steer
and haul—
Bringin' home the *Rio Grande*—ship and freight
and all!”

News in Daly's Bar

IN Daly's Bar, when night is come, and the lighted
gas-lamps glow,
All red and gold the drinks do shine, and the glittering
taps arow,
And out and in by the swinging doors the sailors come
and go.

They come with word of ship and man—with news of
Trade and tide,
From nitrate port and sawmill wharf and islands far
and wide,
And many a foreign sailor town and roaring waterside.

And never a tale goes round the ports from Riga to
Rangoon,
And never a seaman's yarn is spun in a water-front
saloon,
But the sailormen to Daly's Bar they bring it late or soon.

And old or new, and false or true, they bring it near
or far,
From the Golden Gate to Sunda Strait, where ships or
sailors are,
Till soon or late the tale is told at last in Daly's Bar.

And never a ship is cast away, from Leeuwin unto Line,
In ice or fog, in storm or calm, in foul weather or fine,
But they tell the tale in Daly's Bar when the flaring
lamps do shine.

And there one night, when wet and wild the puddled
streets did show,
And all along the silent wharves the volleying wind
did go,
I heard them speak in Daly's Bar of a man I used to
know.

And "Have you spoke Jim Driscoll, then?" I cried,
"and where was he?
Does he sail yet in the windjammers, or has he left the
sea?
Or has he taken a berth in steam by now, the same as
me?"

"Shipmates were we in the old *Kinsale*, and the best
of pals ashore—
You mind the old *Kinsale*—Clay's ship she was in
'94—
They sold her to the Dagoes since—we build her like
no more.

"Shipmates and more were him and me in a time that's
far away—
And for that old time's sake alone I'd give a twelve-
month's pay
To shake Jim Driscoll by the hand and see his face
this day!"

Then up and spoke an old shellback there that close
beside did stand—
All red and blue the bright tattoo showed on each
hairy hand,
And his eyes they narrowed in the glare, as he were
strange to land.

And "Go you South to Sandy Point or North to Behring
Sea,
And ask you news in all the ports both East and West,"
said he,
"But never a man you'll find has seen Jim Driscoll's
face since me.

"I sailed with him from Frisco Bay with a drunken
deadbeat crew
In all the crowd was hardly one could steer beside us
two—
An' he was a decent sailorman—as good's I ever knew.

"There was him an' me an' Sam the Yank, there in the
wild Horn weather,
That hard it blew, our royals went down wind like a
gull's feather—
Him an' me an' the Yank was there on the tops'l yard
together.

"We hauled the blasted tackle out an' got the earing
passed,
An' fisted down the frozen sail an' made the reef-points
fast—
So bad a blow I never saw, but we made all snug at
last.

"The worst damned night I ever knew—blowin', an'
black as hell—
An' how he went, or when he went, there's no one
lives can tell . . .
For the Yank an' me, we never heard nor saw when
Driscoll fell.

"He was somewhere out in the thunderin' dark an'
the roarin' foam to lee."

"What . . . Driscoll dead?" said I. . . . He laughed.
. . . "Ay, dead enough," said he.

"God knows the man was never born could live in such
a sea."

I turned away from Daly's Bar, for I could bear no more
The spilled drink, and the reek of breath, and the
fouled and slimy floor,
And the fool's din of the drunken men that sang, and
laughed, and swore.

I felt the cold rain lash my cheek, and chill me to the
bone,
I heard along the empty streets the wild wind make its
moan,
And I thought of Driscoll dying there in the darkness
all alone.

I heard the roaring of the wind and the beating of the
rain,
And the full tide lap in the dock-basins and the
mooring-ropes complain,
And I thought of him whom on this earth I shall not
meet again.

Music and mirth in lighted rooms I heard as I went by,
The dancers' feet upon the floor, and the laughter
rising high,
And I thought of him who was too strong, too full of
life to die.

And still, for all I heard so clear the words so plainly
said,
And well I know that none comes back by the road he
had to tread,
Still many's the time I think of him, and cannot think
him dead.

Ay, still—though none knows more than I how deep,
how far he lies—
If I, in some strange foreign port, should one day lift
my eyes,
And see him cruising down the street, I should not feel
surprise—

With a whistled tune between his teeth, the way he
used to do,
And his old accordion under his arm, and a crested
cockatoo,
And the roving eye and merry glance, and ready laugh
I knew,—

And we should meet in the old fashion, and greet as
shipmates may,
And a score of tales would be to tell, and a thousand
things to say,
While the day it faded into dark and the night grew
into day,—

And this should be a tale to tell, when all our yarns
were through,
The last and best among them all, and a laugh between
us two,
The news I heard in Daly's Bar, and half believed it
true. . . .

The Rhyme of the *Captive Maid*

A SHIP there sailed in the nitrate trade,
And she went by the name of the *Captive Maid* . . .
Built on the Clyde in sixty-nine
For Reid, Macallister's "Maiden" Line ;
There was many a shellback used to praise
Her turn o' speed in the old-time days ;
But the best of her years were over and done,
And the eighteen-nineties were all but run,
When they hung her up in a fog at last
On a half-tide reef both hard and fast,
Off Punta Arenas, outward bound
To load up nitrates for Puget Sound.
And they took to the boats, and they rowed away,
And there for a score of years she lay,
Safe and snug in a natural dock
With sandy bottom and walls of rock,
Where the biggest sea that ever did roll,
And the fiercest gale from the frozen Pole,
And the bergs and the breakers passed her by—
Passed her and left her and let her lie. . . .

Nothing to hear but the wild winds crying,
Nothing to see but the grey gulls flying ;
A smudge of smoke on a sky-line far,
Sunset, and dawn, and a lonely star ;
Frost and fog and the drifting floe,
The beating rain and the blinding snow ;
An empty sea and an empty sky,
And a long, long dream of the years gone by !

A score of years—while she lay forgotten,
 And her ropes decayed, and her gear grew rotten,
 And her planking gaped to the sun and rain,
 And her paint was tarnished with many a stain,
 And the green mould caked on her idle wheel,
 And the rust bit deep in her slumbering keel;
 And the screaming sea-birds night and day
 Fouled with their droppings each spar and stay;
 A score of years . . . while the world went round,
 And thrones were shaken, and kings discrowned;
 A score of years, till, everyone knows,
 The ships they sank and the freights they rose,
 And all of a sudden somebody said:
 “What about salving the *Captive Maid*?”

They came with hawsers and tugs and men,
 And towed her back to the world again;
 Back to the world once more—but, oh,
 Not the old world that she used to know!
 Where were her men that served her well,
 Kept her watches and struck her bell,
 Learned and humoured her every whim,
 Conned and steered her and watched her trim;
 Scoured and painted and kept her fine,
 Her decks agleam and her yards ashine?
 What of her sisters swift and tall?
 Time and the sea had claimed them all—
 Seas and years and the pirate Hun
 Had made an end of them every one . . .
 Strange new ensigns on every breeze—
 Strange new craft upon all the seas—
 A ghost returned to the world of men,
 Does she wish herself back on her reef again? . . .

Nothing to hear but the wild winds crying,
Nothing to see but the grey gulls flying ;
A smudge of smoke on a sky-line far,
Sunset and dawn, and a lonely star,
Frost and fog and the drifting floe,
The beating rain and the blinding snow ;
An empty sea and an empty sky,
And a long, long dream of the days gone by !

Pictures

"Some likes picturs o' women," said Bill, "an' some likes 'orses best,"

As he fitted a pair of fancy shackles on to his old sea chest,

"But I likes picturs o' ships," said he, "an' you can keep the rest.

"An' if I was a ruddy millionaire with dollars to burn that way,

Instead of a dead-broke sailorman as never saves his pay,

I'd go to some big paintin' guy, an' this is what I'd say :

"'Paint me the *Cully Sark*,' I'd say, 'or the old *Thermopylæ*,

Or the *Star o' Peace* as I sailed in once in my young days at sea,

Shipshape and Blackwall fashion, too, as a clipper ought to be. . . .

"'An' you might do 'er outward bound, with a sky full o' clouds,

An' the tug just dropping astern, an' gulls flyin' in crowds,

An' the decks shiny-wet with rain, an' the wind shakin' the shrouds. . . .

"'Or else racin' up Channel with a sou'wester blowin', Stuns'ls set aloft and alow, an' a hoist o' flags showin', An' a white bone between her teeth so's you can see she's goin'. . . .

“Or you might do 'er off Cape Stiff, in the high
latitudes yonder,
With 'er main deck a smother of white, an' her lee-rail
dippin' under,
An' the big greybeards racin' by an' breakin' aboard
like thunder. . . .

“Or I'd like old Tuskar somewheres abound . . . or
Sydney 'Eads maybe . . .
Or a couple o' junks, if she's tradin' East, to show it's
the China Sea . . .
Or Bar Light . . . or the Tail o' the Bank . . . or a
glimp o' Circular Quay.

“An' I don't want no dabs o' paint as you can't tell
what they are,
Whether they're shadders, or fellers' faces, or blocks,
or blobs o' tar,
But I want gear as looks like gear, an' a spar that's
like a spar.

“An' I don't care if it's North or South, the Trades or
the China Sea,
Shortened down or everything set—close-hauled or
runnin' free—
You paint me a ship as is like a ship . . . an' that'll do
for me!”

Nitrates

ALL alone I went a-walking by the London Docks one
day,
For to see the ships discharging in the basins where
they lay,
And the cargoes that I saw there, they were every sort
and kind,
Every blessed brand of merchandise a man could bring
to mind ;
There were things in crates and boxes, there was stuff
in bags and bales,
There were tea-chests wrapped in matting, there were
Eastern-looking frails,
There were balks of teak and greenheart, there were
stacks of spruce and pine,
There was cork, and frozen carcasses, and casks of
Spanish wine,
There was rice and spice and cocoanuts, and rum
enough was there
For to warm all London's innards up and leave a drop
to spare.

But of all the freights I found there gathered in from
far and wide,
All the smells both nice and nasty from the Pool to
Barkingside,
All the harvest of the harbours from Bombay to
Montreal,
There was one that took my fancy first and foremost of
them all.

It was neither choice nor costly, it was neither rich nor
rare,
And in most ways you can think of it was neither here
nor there,
It was nothing over beautiful to smell nor yet to see,
Only bags of stuffy nitrates . . . but it meant a lot to
me!

I forgot the swarming stevedores—I forgot the dust
and din,
And the rattle of the winches hoisting cargo out and
in,
And the rusty tramp before me with her hatches open
wide,
And the grinding of her derricks as the sacks went
overside ;
I forgot the murk of London and the dull November
sky ;
I was far, ay, far from England in a day that's long
gone by !
I forgot the thousand changes years have brought to
ships and men,
And the knots on Time's old log-line that have reeled
away since then,
And I saw a fast full-rigger with her swelling canvas
spread,
And the steady Trade wind droning in her royals
overhead,
Fleecy Trade clouds on the sky-line—high above the
tropic blue—
And the curved arch of the foresail, and the ocean
gleaming through ;
I recalled the Cape Stiff weather, when your soul-case
seemed to freeze,

And the trampling, cursing watches, and the pouring,
pooping seas,
And the ice on spar and jackstay, and the cracking,
volleying sail,
And the tatters of our voices blowing down the roaring
gale.
I recalled those West Coast harbours just as plain as
yesteryear,—
Nitrate ports all dry and dusty, where they sell fresh
water dear,
Little cities white and wicked on a bleak and barren
shore,
With an anchor on the cliff-side for to show you where
to moor,
And the sour red wine we tasted, and the foolish songs
we sung,
And the girls we had our fun with in the days when
we were young,
And the dancing in the evening down at Dago Bill's
saloon,
And the stars above the mountains, and the sea's
eternal tune.

Only bags of stuffy nitrate from a far Pacific shore
And a dreary West Coast harbour that I'll surely fetch
no more,—
Only bags of stuffy nitrate, with its faint familiar smell
Bringing back the ships and shipmates that I used to
know so well . . .
Half a lifetime lies between us, and a thousand leagues
of sea,
But it called the days departed and my boyhood back
to me!

Bill Brewster

IN Burke's Saloon, among the crowd,
I heard Bill Brewster boasting loud,
Boasting loud and boasting long
A lot of longshore stiffs among.
And oh! the tales Bill Brewster told
About his deeds both brave and bold,
And how he'd tamed on his last trip
A tough-nut, hard-case, blue-nose ship,
Damned the skipper, licked the mate,
And downed a bosun twice his weight,
And had 'em eating from his hand,
Within a week from losing land . . .
And how he'd fought a whole saloon
Of jealous Dagoes, to some tune,
Armed to the teeth with guns and knives,
And sent 'em howling for their lives,
And all because the girls, you know,
They just will love Bill Brewster so!
And somewhere else, off his own bat
He'd laid out six policemen flat,—
For "Boys," said he, "no fatal error,
But when I'm roused I'm sure a terror!"

So off he swaggered with his din
To find more greenhorns to take in,
And all his bunch of stiffs did follow
With all their mouths stretched wide to swallow
The guff Bill handed 'em, like beer . . .
And sure enough Bill's yarns to hear

You'd think no skipper'd stand his ground
For half-an-hour when Bill was round,
Nor any mate that sails the sea
Would dare lay hands on such as he,
Nor port from Bombay to Brazil
But trembles just to hear of Bill.

And yet when once Bill's out at sea,
Why, quite a different chap is he,—
For he's the sort that likes to shirk
Such nasty things as jobs of work,
The sort that never tries to earn
The pay he well knows how to burn,
Or stand his trick, or pull his weight,
Fair and fair like a good shipmate.
The kind of thing that suits Bill more
Is hanging round the galley door,
And licking pots, and peeling spuds,
And dobeying other people's duds,
And eating up the cabin scraps,
And sneaking things off other chaps.
And yet you'd never think how quick
He'll stir himself to dodge a kick,
Nor yet how smart aloft he'll shin
At sight of a belaying-pin.
For Bill afloat's like plenty more
That talk so big when they're ashore,
And once at sea, you'll quickly find
His valour's mostly . . . in his mind!

The Tow-Rope Girls

OH, a ship in the Tropics a-foaming along,
With every stitch drawing, the Trade blowing strong,
The white caps around her all breaking in spray,
For the girls have got hold of her tow-rope to-day.

(An' it's "Haul away, girls, steady an' true,
Polly an' Dolly an' Sally an' Sue,—
Mothers an' sisters an' sweethearts an' all,
Haul away . . . all the way . . . haul away, haul!")

She's logging sixteen as she speeds from the South,
The wind in her royals, a bone in her mouth,
With a wake like a mill-race she rolls on her way,
For the girls have got hold of her tow-rope to-day.

The old man he stood on the poop at high noon ;
He paced fore and aft and he whistled a tune,
Then put by his sextant and thus he did say :
"The girls have got hold of our tow-rope to-day.

"Of cargoes and charters we've had our full share,
Of grain and of lumber enough and to spare,
Of nitrates at Taltal and rice for Bombay,
And the girls have got hold of our tow-rope to-day.

"She has dipped her yards under, hove to off the Horn,
In the fog and the flocs she has drifted forlorn,
Becalmed in the Doldrums a week long she lay,
But the girls have got hold of her tow-rope to-day."

Oh, hear the good Trade wind a-singing aloud
A homeward bound shanty in sheet and in shroud,
Oh, hear how he whistles in halliard and stay:
"The girls have got hold of the tow-rope to-day!"

And it's oh! for the chops of the Channel at last,
The cheer that goes up when the tug-hawser's passed—
The mate's "That'll do"—and a fourteen months' pay—
For the girls have got hold of the tow-rope to-day. . . .

("Then haul away, girls, steady and true,
Polly an' Dolly an' Sally an' Sue,
Mothers an' sisters an' sweethearts an' all,
Haul away—all the way—haul away—haul!")

Seeing the World

“WHERE I was born an’ r’ared,” said Clancy,
“There was pigs an’ cows an’ such,” said he,
“House an’ farm if I’d cared,” said Clancy,
“That’d all have come to me.
An’ if I’d stayed there,” said Clancy,
“If I was there now,” said he,
“I’d have moss instead of hair,” said Clancy,
“An’ roots the same as an ould tree.

“Where I spent my young years,” said Clancy,
“There was lasses two or three,
Fit to give their ears,” said Clancy,
“To go to church along o’ me.
An’ if I’d took a wife,” said Clancy,
“An’ she’d proved a scold,” said he,
“’Twould have been a dog’s life,” said Clancy,
“So I’d just as well be free.

“But when I’ve seen the world,” said Clancy,
“An’ all there is in it,” said he,
“An’ my last sail’s furred,” said Clancy,
“An’ I’m tired of goin’ to sea,
I’ll maybe go an’ settle down there,
An’ raise pigs an’ cows,” said he,
“An’ see if there’s a girl in town there
Waitin’ all this time for me.”

Lee Fore Brace

THERE was ten men hauling on the lee fore brace
In the rain an' the drivin' hail,
An' the mile-long greybeards chargin' by,
An' the thunderin' Cape Horn gale

(That dark it was, you scarce could see
Your hand before your face ;
That cold it was, our fingers froze
Stiff as they gripped the brace.

An' "Christ!" says Dan, "for a night in port
An' a Dago fiddler's tune,
An' just one whiff o' the drinks again
In a Callao saloon!")

There was ten men haulin' on the lee fore brace
When the big sea broke aboard ;
Like a stream in spate, a foaming flood
Right fore an' aft it poured.

The ship, she staggered an' lay still—
So deep, so dead lay she,
You'd think she could not rise again
From such a weight of sea.

There was ten men haulin' on the lee fore brace . . .
Seven when she rose at last ;
The rest was gone to the pitch-dark night,
An' the sea, an' the ice-cold blast.

An' one o' them was Dago Pete,
An' one was Lars the Dane,
An' the third was the lad whose like on earth
I shall not find again.

.

An' I'll heave an' haul an' stand my wheel,
An' reef an' furl wi' the rest . . .
For winds an' seas go on the same,
When they've took an' drowned the best.

An' it ain't no use to curse the Lord,
Nor it ain't no sense to moan,
For a man must live his life the same,
An' keep his grief his own.

An' I'll drink my drink an' sing my song,
An' nobody'll know but me
A lump o' my heart went down with Dan
That night in the wild Horn sea'

Figureheads

“ You never see a decent figure’ead—

Not now,” Bill said,

“ A fiddlin’ bit o’ scroll-work at the bow,

That’s the most now . . .

But Lord! I’ve seen some beauties, more’n a few,

An’ some rare rum uns, too.

“ Folks in all sorts o’ queer old-fashioned rigs—

Fellers in wigs—

Chaps in cocked ’ats an’ ’elmets—lords an’ dukes—

Folks out o’ books—

Niggers in turbans—mandarins an’ Moors—

An’ ’eathen gods by scores.

“ An’ women in all kinds o’ fancy dresses—

Queens an’ princesses—

Witches on broomsticks, too—an’ spankin’ girls

With streamin’ curls—

An’ dragons, an’ sea-serpents—Lord knows what

I’ve seen an’ what I’ve not.

“ An’ some’s in breakers’ yards, bleached bare with time

An’ thick with grime;

An’ some stuck up in gardens here an’ there

With plants for ’air;

An’ no one left as knows but chaps like me

How fine with paint and gold they used to be

In them old days at sea.”

Witches

"FINNS, they're witches," said Murphy, "'tis born in
'em maybe,

The same as fits, an' freckles, an' follerin' the sea,
An' ginger 'air in some folks . . . an' likin' beer in me.

"Finns, they're witches," said Murphy, "an' powerful
strong ones too . . .

They'll whistle a wind from nowhere, an' a storm out 'o
the blue

'Ud sink this 'ere old hooker, an' all her bloomin crew.

"Finns, they're witches," said Murphy, rubbing his
hairy chin,

"An' some says witchcraft's bunkum, an' some it's deadly
sin,

But . . . there ain't no 'arm as I see in standin' well
with a Finn."

The Way of a Ship

(For Music)

I. ROSARIO

EARLY in the morning the moon was in the sky ;
Early in the morning I kissed my girl good-bye ;
For kissing-time is over and it's time and time to go
When you've a long road to travel to Rosario.

Oh, wake her—oh, shake her!—and the Peter's flying
free,
And the pilot's come aboard her, and she's hungry for
the sea ;
Kissing-time is over and it's time and time to go,
And a long road to travel to Rosario !

Summer'll soon be over, the leaves'll fade and die,
And white on every furrow the winter snows will lie ;
But we're bound for the long furrow where never lies
the snow . . .

And we've a long road to travel to Rosario !

Oh, wake her—oh, shake her!—and the cable surges in
To the roar of a shanty chorus as we make the hand-
spikes spin. . . .

Oh, she's bound for the long furrow where never lies the
snow—

And a long road to travel to Rosario !

And now she smells the deep sea, and now she's gather-
ing way,

And now she meets the rollers in a white smother of
spray—

Sou'west and a half west, and steady as you go . . .
 And a long road to travel to Rosario !

Oh, wake her—oh, shake her!—and it's good-bye to the
 shore,
 With the north wind in her topsails and the whole wide
 world before . . .

Sou'west and a half west and steady as you go—
 And a long road to travel to Rosario !

II. THE WAY OF A SHIP

GIVE me a tall barque swinging
 South'ard with all she'll stand ;
 Give me the sea's voice singing
 Far out of sight of land ;
 And East way or West way,
 North or South the Line,
 The way of a ship is the best way—
 A ship's way the way that's mine !

Give me the royals gleaming
 Silver against the moon—
 Give me the white wake streaming,
 Give me the Trade's old tune . . .
 And East way or West way,
 Up or down the sea,
 The way of a ship is the best way,
 A ship's way's the way for me !

III. CASEY'S CONCERTINA

THERE are lights a-flashing in the harbour from the ships
 at anchor where they ride,
 And a dry wind going through the palm-trees, and the
 long low murmur of the tide . . .
 And there's noise and laughter in the foc's'le, and the
 bare feet beating out the tune
 To the sound of Casey's concertina underneath the great
 gold moon—
 Creaky old leaky concertina underneath the great gold
 moon.

There's a milky glimmer on the water, and the lonely
 glitter of the stars,
 And a light breeze blowing up the roadstead, and a voice
 a-sighing in the spars,
 A-sighing, crying in the backstays, and the furled sails
 sleeping overhead,
 And the sound of Casey's concertina, singing of a time
 that's fled—
 Leaky old creaky concertina singing of a dream that's
 dead.

IV. MORNING WATCH

THE high stars grow paler—
 Day comes to the sea ;
 The sky's rim unbroken,
 The ship running free,—

White sea-birds that follow
 And call on her way ;
 Bright flying fish gleaming
 In rainbows of spray,—

Wide seas all around her,
 The wide skies above,
 And the long road before her
 That leads to my love!

v. "ROLL ALONG HOME!"

I THOUGHT I heard the old man say—
 "Aye, aye, roll along home!—
 Bound home for old England we're sailing to-day—
 Heave up the anchor and roll along home!
 The pilot's aboard and the capstan is manned,
 Blue Peter a-waving farewell to the land,
 For after long waiting our orders have come
 To heave up the anchor and roll along home—
 Roll—roll along home!

"The sails they are bent and the cargo is stowed—
 Aye, aye, roll along home!—
 And far will her way be and lonely her road—
 Shake out your topsails and roll along home!
 Yes, long is the road through the storm and the shine
 That brings me back home to you, true love of mine;
 No longer I'll wander, no further I'll roam,
 But shake out my topsails and roll along home—
 Roll—roll along home!"

(Musical setting by Easthope Martin : Messrs Enoch & Son.)

The Old Ships

THEY called them from the breakers' yards, the shores
of Dead Men's Bay,
From coaling wharves the wide world round, red-rusty
where they lay,
And chipped and caulked and scoured and tarred and
sent 'em on their way.

It didn't matter what they were nor what they once
had been,
They cleared the decks of harbour-junk and scraped the
stringers clean,
And turned 'em out to try their luck with the mine and
submarine. . . .

With a scatter o' pitch and a plate or two,
And she's fit for the risks o' war . . .
Fit for to carry a freight or two,
The same as she used before,—
To carry a cargo here or there,
And what she carries she don't much care,—
Boxes or barrels or balks or bales,
Coals or cotton or nuts or nails,
Pork or pepper or Spanish beans,
Mules or millet or sewing-machines,
Or a trifle o' lumber from Hastings Mill,—
She's carried 'em all and she'll carry 'em still,
The same as she's done before.

And some were waiting for a freight, and some were
laid away,

And some were liners which had broke all records in
their day,

And some were common eight-knot tramps that couldn't
make it pay.

And some were has-been sailing cracks of famous old
renown,

Had logged their eighteen easy when they ran their
eastings down

With cargo, mails and passengers bound south from
London town. . . .

With a handful or two o' ratline stuff,

And she's fit for to sail once more,

She's rigged and she's ready and right enough,

The same as she was before,—

The same old ship on the same old road

She's always used and she's always knowed . . .

For there isn't a blooming wind can blow

In all the latitudes high or low,

Nor there isn't a kind of sea that rolls

From both the Tropics to both the Poles,

But she's knowed 'em all since she sailed Sou'

Spain,

She's weathered the lot and she'll do it again,

The same as she's done before !

And foreign trade or coasting craft, the big ships with
the small,

The barges which were steamers once, the hulks which
once were tall,

They wanted tonnage cruel bad, and so they fetched
'em all.

And some went out as fighting craft and shipped a
 fighting crew,
 But most just tramped the same old round they always
 used to do,
 With a crowd o' merchant sailormen as might be me or
 you. . . .

With a lick o' paint and a bucket o' tar,
 And she's fit for the seas once more,—
 To carry the Duster near or far
 The same as she used before . . .
 The same old Rag on the same old round,
 Bar Light Vessel and Puget Sound,
 Dutch and Dagoes, niggers and Chinks,
 Palms and fire-flies, spices and stinks,—
 Brass and Bonny and Grand Bassam,
 Both the Rios and Rotterdam—
 Portland, Oregon, Portland, Maine,
 She's been there once and she'll go there again,
 The same as she's been before.

Their bones are strewed to every tide from Torres Strait
 to Tyne ;
 By storm or calm, by night or day, from Longships light
 to Line,
 God's truth, they've paid their blooming dues to the
 tin-fish and the mine

With a bomb or a mine or a bursting shell,
 And she'll follow the sea no more ;
 She's fetched and carried and served us well
 The same as she's done before—
 They've fetched and carried and gone their way
 As good ships should and as brave men may,

The way of Nelson, the way of Drake,
And all who have died for the old Rag's sake,
Fought and suffered and sailed and died
For England's honour and England's pride . . .
And we'll build 'em still and we'll breed 'em
again—
The same good ships and the same good men—
The same—the same—the same as we've done
before !

The Red Duster

(R.N.R. demobilised)

OH, some will save their Navy pay and take their ease
ashore,
And some will sit at an office desk and go to sea no
more,
And some will follow the blooming plough and hear the
skylark's song,
But oh ! it's me for the old Red Duster, for that's where
I belong.

I'll sign and sail in the Lord knows what—I'll go the
Lord knows where—
From Hudson's Bay I'll beat my way to the Straits of
old Le Mair ;
From Pernambuck to Palembang, and I know I'll not
go wrong
So long's I'm under the old Red Duster, for that's
where I belong.

I'll take a turn in the Black Sea trade, a trick on the
Gulf Ports run,
I'll feel the bite of the Cape Horn cold, and the burn
o' the Perim sun ;
I'll make the round of the blessed lot from the Gun-
fleet to Hong-Kong,
When I get back to the old Red Duster—the place
where I belong.

I'll ship aboard of the first that comes, and any old
thing'll do,
And I don't much care if she's sail or steam, or whether
she's old or new,
There'll be never a tramp too foul for me, nor a spouter
smell too strong,
So long's I'm under the old Red Duster—for that's
where I belong!

For Navy chaps are Navy chaps—good luck to all and
one!
And Navy ways are Navy ways—and now the fighting's
done,
I'm sick at heart for a shellback's yarn my old-time
pals among,
And oh! it's me for the old Red Duster, for that's
where I belong!

London River

Oh, why do you hang out your bunting so gay?—
 Away-ay . . . London River!—
My ship that I've watched for has come home to-day
 To London River by London town.

I have waited her long, I have wept for her sore
 Away-ay . . . London River!—
For they tell me I never should see my ship more
 In London River or London town.

They told me my ship was sunk deep in the sea—
 Away-ay . . . London River!—
No more to come home with a cargo for me—
 To London River and London town.

She is a flash packet—flash packet of fame—
 Away-ay . . . London River!—
She flies the Red Ensign, the *Briton's* her name
 Of London River and London town.

And what of her captain, her mates and her crew?—
 Away-ay . . . London River!—
Oh, never sailed seamen more gallant and true
 From London River or London town.

They were mined off the Nore at the start of a trip—
 Away-ay . . . London River!—
And came home in their singlets to find a fresh ship
 On London River by London town.

They have hungered and thirsted and shivered and
burned—

Away-ay . . . London River!—

In boats in mid-ocean, and last have returned
To London River and London town.

Yes, still they've come back as they have done before—

Away-ay—London River!—

And all that they thought of was sailing once more
From London River and London town!—

And what is the cargo that's stowed in her hold!—

Away-ay—London River!—

It is worth all the silver and worth all the gold
Of London River and London town.

A cargo of glory—a cargo of fame—

Away-ay . . . London River!—

A freight of fresh laurels to garland the name
Of London River and London town.

A song to be sung and a yarn to be spun—

Away-ay . . . London River!—

While your tides they do flow and your waters do run—
London River!—by London town.

Steel Rails

SHE sailed out o' Sunderland with a cargo o' rails—
She sailed out o' Sunderland all among the March
gales;
With a cargo o' steel rails towards the Baltic she
bore . . .
An' she'll sail out o' Sunderland with steel rails no
more!

An' no one'll tell us, for no one'll know,
If she went at last sudden, or if she went slow,
But for all that we don't know, oh, this much is sure,
She'll sail out o' Sunderland with steel rails no more.

An' the ships out o' Sunderland, they will put forth
again
Bearing up for the Baltic in the wind an' the rain,
In the wind an' the weather when the March gales do
roar—
But she'll sail out o' Sunderland with steel rails no
more.

An' one lot o' steel rails, oh, it's just like another,
But there's no lad the same as her own to his mother—
No lad in the world like the one that she bore . . .
An' he'll sail out o' Sunderland with steel rails no
more!

Dan's Dream

HERE's the dream I had, boys, an' I tell you true,
I saw the old *Fulmar* plain as I see you . . .
I saw the old *Fulmar* as she used to be
Many an' many a year since, when I was first at sea.

Just the bloomin' same, lads, as I've seen her look
Crackin' on with all she'd stand, bound for Pernambuco ;
Every stitch a-drawin'—flyin' kites an' all—
An' the crowd all haulin', tallyin' on the fall.

All her swellin' canvas shinin' as she came,
Rosy in the sunset, with her gilt trucks aflame,
With a bone between her teeth, under royals runnin'
free,
I saw the old *Fulmar* swingin' out to sea.

I saw the old man there, as life-like as you please,
With his old white whiskers blowin' in the breeze,
An' the mate in the waist, an' the look-out at the fore,
An' old Slush standin' just inside his galley door.

All the crowd was there, boys, all the chaps I knew,
Dagoes, Dutch an' British, good an' bad uns too,
The seamen an' the sojers, the worst an' the best,
An' myself there among 'em, haulin' with the rest.

That's the dream I had, boys, an' so I tell you true,
I saw the old *Fulmar*—I saw her an' I knew—
Knew her to a gantline as I ought to know—
Me as served aboard her forty years ago.

An' the old hooker's gone, lads, as they all go at last, •
With the good days an' the bad days an' the old time
that's past,
Gone like many another, hull an' mast an' spar,
Splintered into matchwood on Astoria Bar.

An' the crowd's gone too, lads, gone the same as her,
Spread abroad like driftwood, scattered God knows
where ;
Some's dead ashore, bullies, some's drowned at sea,
An' some's grey an' old like the lad that once was me !

Pacific Coast

HALF across the world to westward there's a harbour
that I know,

Where the ships that load with lumber and the China
liners go,—

Where the wind blows cold at sunset off the snow-
crowned peaks that gleam

Out across the Straits at twilight like the landfall of a
dream.

There's a sound of foreign voices—there are wafts of
strange perfume—

And a two-stringed fiddle playing somewhere in an
upstairs room ;

There's a rosy tide lap-lapping on an old worm-eaten
quay,

And a scarlet sunset flaming down behind the China
Sea.

And I daresay if I went there I should find it all the
same,

Still the same old sunset glory setting all the skies
aflake,

Still the smell of burning forests on the quiet evening
air,—

Little things my heart remembers nowhere else on
earth but there.

Still the harbour gulls a-calling, calling all the night
and day,

And the wind across the water singing just the same
old way

As it used to in the rigging of a ship I used to know,
Half across the world from England, many and many a
year ago.

She is gone beyond my finding—gone for ever, ship and
man,
Far beyond that scarlet sunset flaming down behind
Japan ;
But I'll maybe find the dream there that I lost so long
ago—
Half across the world to westward in a harbour that I
know—
Half across the world from England many and many a
year ago.

Memories

"SHIPS . . . they go," said Murphy, "like a spent
pay-roll . . .

They're sunk in the deep water or they're wrecked in
the shoal ;

Burnt or scrapped in the long run, the big ships an'
small,—

An' the ships a man remembers, they're the best ships
of all.

"Friends . . . they go," said Murphy, "the false an'
the true,

They all go at the finish, the same as the ships do ;

They go like a spree that's ended or a last year's song,

But the friends a man remembers, they're his own his
life long.

"Times . . . they pass," said Murphy, "the fair and
foul weather,

The good times an' the bad times, they all pass to-
gether ;

Like a steersman's trick that's ended, or a blown-out
squall . . .

An' the times a man remembers . . . they're the best
times of all !"

Sailor's Farewell

LOVELY is the white town, and smiling it lies
With little green gardens underneath the blue skies,
Days so full of sunshine, nights so full of glee,—
Oh, a fair place, a rare place, for sailors in from sea.

A pleasant place to come to for ships long from land,
A bright place, a light place, with mirth on every hand,
Is the white smiling city by the blue Pacific shore . . .
And I wish in my heart I may never see it more.

There's a wide white plaza where folk pass to and fro,
And a drowsy tune sounding on all the winds that
 blow,
Church-bells all the morning, fiddles all the night . . .
Oh, a neat place, a sweet place, for sailormen's delight!

But it's heave and break her out . . . and the best
 tune of all
Is the rattle of the windlass, the clicking of the pawl,
And the steady wind a-blowing, yes, blowing off the
 shore,
From the white smiling city that I would see no more.

For cruel is the white town for all it looks so fair,
There's a cloud upon the sunshine and there's sorrow
 everywhere,
And blue as Mary Mother's robe the sea is and the
 sky . . .
But a bitter hate I'll bear it until the day I die!

So Long

ALL coiled down, an' it's time for us to go ;
Every sail's furled in a neat harbour stow ;
Another ship for me, an' for her another crew—
An' so long, sailorman . . . good luck to you !

Fun an' friends I wish you till the pay's all gone—
Pleasure when you spend it an' content when it's
done—
An' a chest that's not empty when you go back to
sea,
An' a better ship than she's been—an' a truer pal
than me.

A good berth I wish you, in a ship that's well found,
With a decent crowd forrard, an' her gear all sound,
Spars a man can trust to when it's comin' on to blow,
An' no bosun bawlin' when it's your watch below.

A good Trade I wish you, an' a fair landfall,
Neither fog, nor iceberg, nor long calm, nor squall,
A pleasant port to come to when the work's all
through—
An' so long, sailorman . . . good luck to you.

A Saint of Cornwall

I DON'T know who Saint Mawes was, but he surely can't
have been

A stiff old stone gazebo on a carved cathedral screen,
Or a holy-looking customer rigged out in blue and red
In a sunset-coloured window with a soup-plate round
his head.

But he must have been a skipper who had sailed the
salt seas round,

(Or at least as many of 'em as had in his time been
found),

And sung his song and kissed his girl and had his share
of fun,

Till he took and got religion, when his sailing days
were done.

He must have had a ruddy face, a grey beard neatly
trimmed,

And eyes, with crow's feet round them, neither age nor
use had dimmed,

And he'd lean there on the jetty with his glass up to
his eye,

And look across the Carrick Roads, and watch the ships
go by,

And yarn with his old cronies of the ships he used to
know,

And shipmates that he sailed with many and many a
year ago,

In the West of England tin-boats on the Tyre and
Sidon run,

Before he got religion or his sailing days were done.

And when he came at last to die, they'd lay him down
to rest

On a green and grassy foreland sloping gently to the
west,

Where the wind's cry and the gull's cry would be near
him night and day,

And a rousing deep-sea shanty might come to him
where he lay.

And they left him there a-sleeping, for to smell the
harbour smells,

And to count the passing watches by the striking of
the bells,

And listen to the sailormen a-singing in the sun,

Like a good old master mariner whose sailing days are
done.

Fiddler John: A Country Tale

FIDDLER JOHN he used to dwell
A long while since, so I've heard tell,
In an old thatched house with a leaning wall
That always looked just ready to fall . . .
And wherever you went, both far and near,
When folks did meet to make good cheer,
Why, every time you'd find in the middle
Old bent John and his old cracked fiddle. . . .

With a catch, a round, and a country dance,
A fine new tune *à la mode de France*,
A stave for sorrow, a stave for mirth,
This for a wedding, that for a birth,
"Ground for the Floor" and "The Green Grass
Grows" . . .
"Man's Life's a Vapour and full of Woes" . . .
An alehouse glee when the full quarts foam,
And a right jolly lilt for a harvest home.

Fiddler John, he grew so old
He kept his bed, so I've been told,
He kept his bed and there he lay
In his old thatched house for many a day;
And the lads and the lasses loitering by,
On summer nights they 'ud linger nigh
To hear him play by the light o' the moon
On his old cracked fiddle each old, old tune.

A catch, a round, and a country dance,
A fine new tune *à la mode de France*,

A stave for sorrow, a stave for mirth,
 This for a wedding, that for a birth ;
 "Ground for the Floor" and "The Green Grass
 Grows" . . .
 "Man's Life's a Vapour and full of Woes" . . .
 An ale-house glee when the full quarts foam,
 And a right jolly lilt for a harvest home !

Fiddler John, he is dead and gone ;
 His green, green grave the grass grows on—
 Fiddler John, he lies in the ground,
 And the green grass grows all around, all around ;
 His bones are dust and his fiddle's rotten,
 And his old, old tunes they are all forgotten.
 And the old thatched place where he used to dwell
 It leaned some more and down it fell. . . .
 But still, they say, when the moon's at the full,
 And the mist on the common's as white as wool,
 When the river's loud on the distant weirs,
 And they're all abed at the "Crook and Shears,"
 By Fiddler's Field if you're homeward going,
 You'll see what looks like a garden growing . . .
 Ranks of carrots and beans and peas,
 Plums and apples on gnarled old trees,
 Tall white lilies as straight as arrows,
 Sprouts and cabbage and big green marrows,—
 And out of the house that stands in the middle
 You can hear a sound like an old cracked fiddle. . . .

With a catch, a round, and a country dance,
 A fine new tune *à la mode de France*,
 A stave for sorrow, a stave for mirth,
 This for a bridal and that for a birth,

“Ground for the Floor” and “The Green Grass
Grows” . . .

“Man’s Life’s a Vapour and full of Woes” . . .

An ale-house jig when the quart mugs foam,
And a right jolly lilt for the last load home!

The Pool by the Mill

No one bathes in the pool,
The deep pool by the mill. . . .

There's never the flash of a limb,
Nor a boy's form, straight and slim,
Taking off for a dive,
Making the stillness alive
Of the deep pool by the mill.

It's the best place for a swim
Up the river or down ;
For it's always clear and still,
Deep and tempting and cool,
In the shadows green and brown
Of the deep pool by the mill.

When the boys come from the school
They run with laughter and cries,
Strip, and splash in the shallows
Where the minnows glance, and the swallows
Dart for the dancing flies,
But no one bathes in the pool—
The deep pool by the mill—
Because of the thing in the pool
That drags them down.

The Portsmouth Road

As I went down the Portsmouth Road, a careless,
rambling fellow,
The stormcock whistled on the bough a stave both loud
and mellow ;
To hear his song I paused awhile, then tossed it back
with laughter,
But all along the seaward road I heard it following
after :

“ East—west—home’s best—you’ll wander far and lone,
lad,
But of all the lands you’ll find on earth, there’s none
just like your own, lad.”

As I went down the Portsmouth Road my step was
light and merry ;
I met a tramping gipsy wife, as brown as any berry ;
She told my fortune for a crown, but little did it please
me
To hear her speaking once again the same old words
to tease me :

“ East—west—home’s best—you’ll wander far and lone,
lad,
But of all the lands you’ll find on earth, there’s none
just like your own, lad !”

I wandered there, I rambled there, since I set forth
that morning,
And many's the time I thought about that gipsy's word
of warning ;
And many a strange far land I saw, and gaudy foreign
city,
And often enough did seem to hear once more the
stormcock's ditty :

“ East—west—home's best—you'll wander far and lone,
lad,
But of all the lands you'll find on earth, there's none
just like your own, lad ! ”

As I came up the Portsmouth Road, my bundle on my
shoulder,
The years had come, the years had gone, and I was
growing older ;
The wayside fires were white and cold, the leaves were
turning yellow,
And never a gipsy crossed my path, nor stormcock
whistled mellow :

“ East—west—home's best—you'll wander far and lone,
lad,
But of all the lands you'll find on earth, there's none
just like your own, lad ! ”

But what cared I for silent bird, or what for fires
forsaken,
From many a land and many a sea whose homeward
road was taken ?

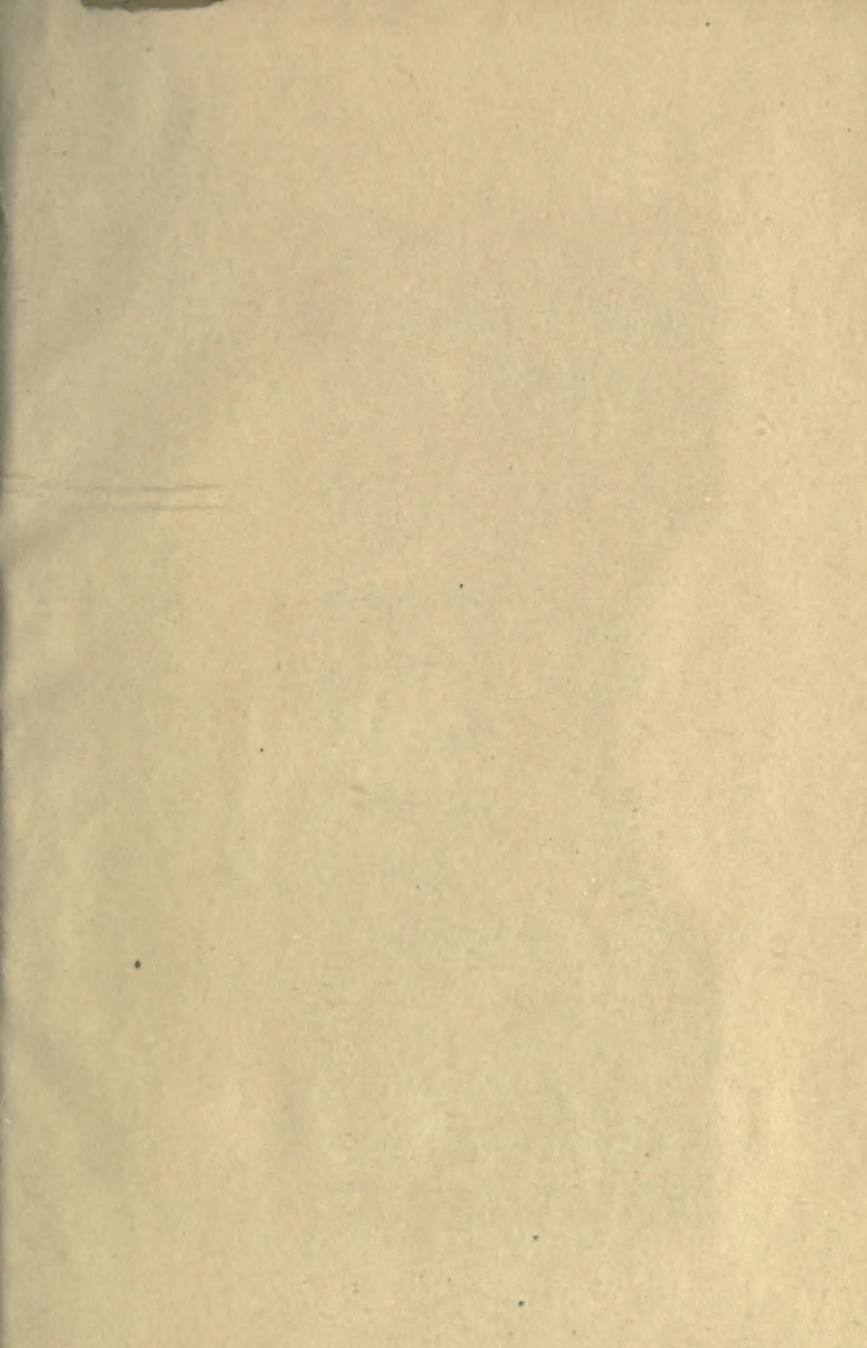
The gipsy's words were in my heart, a fire to cheer and
warm me,
And all the way the stormcock's tune went singing on
before me :

“ East—west—home's best—you'll wander far and lone,
lad,
But of all the loves you'll find on earth, there's none
just like your own, lad ! ”

NOTE

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