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The
Wreck of the Titanic



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The Wreck of the Titanic

A Poem

By DR. HORACE GREELEY

ILLUSTRATED BY THE AUTHOR



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By

Horace Greeley

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THE WRECK OF THE TITANIC

TO HER EIGHT MUSICIANS:

HARTLEY, HUME, TAYLOR, CLARK, WOODWARD, BRAILEY,
KRINS, AND BREICOUX

We dedicate this verse to you who died,
Undaunted bandsmen eight, where side by side
You braved the demon Fear so few indeed
Could feel the pangs on which he's wont to feed;
Tight drew your courage with your violin string,
And ev'ry note sprung vibrant with its ring,
So music's endless chain in your control
Held up men's hearts and tempered ev'ry soul;
Enforced with yours their valor stood the test,
And showed when we must die how 'tis done best.
Whence came your spirit? Needs more than your race
'Mid whom your forebear minstrels marked the pace
To which its heroes wrought their deeds sublime,
Kindling a flame to glorify their time.
In many stories that we've read of old,
Of daring exploits, sacrifices bold,
None have surpassed this deed superbly done,
None greater glory than yourselves have won.
So shall we crown you with those laurel wreaths
Which as his due each noblest man receives,
And on each bay we'll write in measured line
The true, sad story ye have made divine!

THE love of travel and its changing view,
Which ever brings to one impressions new,
Rejuvenates the mind as much as sleep,
For, when our senses have been furrowed deep
By one impress, adjoining substance may
Receive another in another way;
And after this awhile has entertained
The wearied takes its place with strength regained.
While some enjoy such pleasures as they list,
To most they come but with that golden mist
That rises from our thoughts when dreaming o'er
The script of pilgrims from some other shore;
Among these most a few there always are
Who formulate this haze into a star
Which leads them vainly on to find, it seems,
What they should hope for only in their dreams;
Still home and friends, their scanty hoard are cast
Where soon t'enchancement of the future gilds the past.

THE WRECK OF THE TITANIC

Of such the burden the Titanic bore:
The idler, whom we oft should credit more—
For leisure breeds the thoughts that lead the wise,
Without it how could man philosophize?
The emigrant, much nearer to the soil,
Whose hope to rise from bread-and-butter toil
Lies in the fate the future holds away
That chance will favor him in some strange way;
And then the merchant, counting o'er his store,
How by new scheming he may make it more,
Regretting pleasure oft, if nothing gained—
The frugal habit's strict when once obtained;
"Industry's Cavalier" on forage bent,
Good losing lambs, it seems, are always sent;
There were the lovers, seeking many skies
To view their beauties in each others eyes;
And then those great men, who, when seen afar,
Cause wonder as the fabled child felt for the star.

THE WRECK OF THE TITANIC

Four days at sea on such a pleasure boat
Brought no sea-knowledge but they were afloat;
For so elab'rate had the builder's art
Outfitted her that all might from the start
Imagine they stopped at some beach hotel
That fashion sought t'in lazy comfort dwell;
The decks on which they sat or idly strolled
Piazzas looking seaward where they lolled.
And so upon the fourth, a Sunday's eve,
No thought of danger could a soul conceive;
A concert some attended, some a prayer,
Some played at cards, few tempted the chill air;
While others visited their new made friends,
Discussed at length their journey and its ends;
At dinner-parties, some made merry late,
Where jovial friends together drank and ate;
Till growing quietude closed o'er the day
And drove the most to bed fatigue would not obey.

THE WRECK OF THE TITANIC

The sea is calm, the night is cold and clear,
No rocks are nigh, what should a staunch ship fear?
The bridge is paced, the crow's-nest watch is manned,
The saving wireless ready to command—
What was the message that the Captain told
From other ships o'er ether's waves had rolled?
That in advance of their wave cleaving prow
A fleet of icebergs hovered, hover now!
Such news the watch had often heard before,
Its warnings hazard always said ignore;
So forward by the glowing starry light
Sped on the ship with naught to fear in sight.
What was it Murdock thought of on the bridge,
As to-and-fro on that commanding ridge
He paced? What else but his dear English home,
Which, though his calling dragged him forth to roam,
Held all his love, ambition and his care,
And drew on sigh-wing's wafture his true spirit there!

THE WRECK OF THE TITANIC

A bashful man, he long admired aside,
Restrained by her deserving and his pride;
Both these so balanced that it seemed in vain
To hope the one the other might o'erstrain
So he could speak the craving prayer he felt
And stand where now devotion mutely knelt;
His latest furlough o'er he sought her last
To bid adieu, he thought, as in the past;
But as he faltered out a last farewell,
As many merging ripples raise a swell,
All the restrained emotions of the past
Surged to his brain and had their way at last.
So oft it is the case that women know
What lies ahead and when a wind shall blow
'Tis long expected, so her ready sail
Caught in the breeze and let the breeze prevail.
She made the home-land, England, doubly dear,
Through husband-lover's eyes a paradise appear!

THE WRECK OF THE TITANIC

How can we hope when we so truly know
That all we rear can ne'er escape the blow
That nature has in store for each apart,
For all that build a mind or mould a heart ;
That as we struggle to a higher state
The pangs grow keener, harder still our fate !
Murdock, be firm, for now the chancing's near
That visits all, both those who brave or fear !
Three bells are heard, the lookout 'phones in haste,
And hard-a-starboard is the rudder placed ;
But all too late, for though she swerves away
The power that sped her on must have its play,
And on a darkly covering iceberg rives
The greatest ship that e'er bore human lives !
The engines quickly stopped, the bulkheads closed,
The crew all called to stations—those who dozed
Were barely wakened by the gentle jar,
Much like a row-boat scraping o'er a rocky bar !

THE WRECK OF THE TITANIC

Lieutenant Murdock turns, the Captain greets,
In hurried words the happening repeats;
Quick orders issued bid them sound the hold,
But news already comes, ill's quickly told,
That water's rising everywhere below
So fast that pumps were useless, that the blow
Cut through the steel clad monster's under-side
As sword-fish pierces whale in battle glide!
The skipper bit his lip and gripped the rail,
But quickly rallying said, "None of you fail
T'assure those whom we now must quickly wake
We launch the boats but for precaution's sake:
She cannot sink, else panic may prevail
And spread disorder over all avail;
Take women first and children, all ye may;
Take out all boats and quickly pull away,
Within an hour we'll rest beneath the wave,
But courage holding, mates, there're some we'll surely save!"

THE WRECK OF THE TITANIC

He bids the wireless boys to thrill the air
And call responding ships to their despair;
Then soon there comes an answering quiver back
Three trembling ships bear hard upon their track,
Their captains turn them from their destined course
And forward to the rescue, at full force!
A boat unlimbered dangles o'er the rail,
But hardly with a few can they prevail
To leave the ship, which yet but slightly lists,
Such needless care their confidence resists;
On decks so solid need the timid quail?
To trust the ocean in a thing so frail
Would surely be the quickest way to drown!
Still o'er the side some nineteen rattle down,
And seventy feet below rest on the sea
So tranquil that 'twas strange that such could be,
For gurgles, ripples t'every move respond
As on the placid surface of a garden pond!

THE WRECK OF THE TITANIC

Two sailors and a 'master made the crew,
And fast away the tiny vessel drew;
They pulled ahead to make a guiding light
Borne on a ship some distance off, in sight.
"Be that your haven," said the Captain last,
"Unload your boat and here again make fast."
Meanwhile the steamer's Morse light-signals flash,
Appealing rockets skyward make their dash,
And bombs resound to draw attention where
Quick aid is needed, else the most despair!
For deep her bow is settling in the tide
As other boats swing loaded o'er the side;
As one descends, beneath is heard a roar,
And then is seen a threat'ning torrent pour—
'Tis what the pumps throw out, though but in vain,
Too great the gash they struggle 'gainst to gain!
A whirlwind could not draw that water out
In its most mighty, thirsty, draining water-spout!

THE WRECK OF THE TITANIC

With ropes still clinging, drifting on the sea,
Now none can find the pin to set them free,
And o'er their heads descends another boat;
This stopped in time by warning from each throat
Beneath its keel, gives chance a moment's play,
And out they swing with tackle cut away!
The deluge whirls them 'round in time to face
The other boat just landed in their place.
Upon the ship assurance now subsides,
And in its place restrained emotion hides,
For fast the tilt increases, decks descend,
And none may now but reason of the end.
Upon the port side Murdock clears away,
Lightoller on the starboard all obey,
While from the bridge the Captain views the light
Approach and veer, soon fading out of sight.
What were his thoughts no one may ever tell,
But for the most all hope passed on, this he knew well!

THE WRECK OF THE TITANIC

“Accurséd Captain of yon passing boat,
How can you live, how can you keep afloat?
These signals in plain view your sense must feel,
And yet away you turn your doggéd keel!
What though the ice be nigh, or danger great,
How can you pass and leave us to our fate?
If but a spark of what we call a soul
Could in your carcass live ’twould all control,
Veer round your helm, your engines drive full speed,
In glorious rapture spring to meet our need!
But no, if ever such in your foul heart
Implanted at your birth its growth could start
’Twas early smothered by your muddy blood,
And nurtured by this filthy sluggish flood
Your mind became the thing that turns away
When drowning brothers cry for aid to-day!
Though all would live still here is none so low
Who’d ’change his dying state with yours, full well I know!”

THE WRECK OF THE TITANIC

If thus it was the Captain felt and thought
To wordy utterance 'twas never brought.
Perhaps he knew that such a common thing,
Neglect of others, small reproach might bring;
Familiar, doubtless, was t'averted look,
The hastened step that misery forsook;
"I have no time, let others lend their aid,"
With which the nearest ones such tasks evade;
Or else he left both judgment and repay
Where he believed effective power lay!
Which e'er it was, let us who hear the tale
Survivors brought in harrowing detail,
Be not too rash, in haste lay not our curse
On stupid carelessness, perhaps, for worse;
But as the signalled ship passed by unnamed,
Let us pass by her skipper still unblamed;
Yet were he guilty, punishment there's none
Could reach the quickless sense of such a hardened one!

THE WRECK OF THE TITANIC

The later life-boats tense their tackle strain,
For most are eager seats therein to gain;
Full seventy souls were safe within, afloat,
But in the launching, such a heavy boat
Might spring a seam or even rift a rope;
So caution by a third reduced their scope.
Fifteen young bridegrooms thrust unwilling brides,
Speechless from anguish, sobbing, from their sides,
But cheerly still in word, if not in heart;
“Goodbye, my love, but for a time we part,
Your safety first assured, I’ll follow fast,
Goodbye, one kiss, until the next ’twill last.”
“My Lucien, can’t my Lucien come with me?
There’s room enough, hold sir, Oh heed my plea!”
But quick the order, quicker spin the wheels,
The boat descends, the sweet-faced girl-wife reels,
And, caught by calmer suff’ers by her side,
Now lives. the tender nobleness of him who died!

THE WRECK OF THE TITANIC

But some refuse, more sober age has brought
Keener perception, better gauging thought;
Whatever chance there is, they will not take,
That he may follow, naught but force can make
Them leave the side by which so long they've stood
Averting evil, welcoming the good;
So these draw back, the worse prefer to bear,
Disdaining better if he cannot share.
"Sometime we've been together, come what may
Now or henceforth, together we shall stay;
In youth I took thine arm, I grasp it now
To follow thy good fortune, or to bow
To all Jehovah sends of what is ill,
With the same spirit and the same good will;
Without thee all were desolate and dead,
All good were evil, evil in its stead,
With thee to lean upon, seems naught to fear;
'Tis likewise with thyself towards me, so I stay here!"

THE WRECK OF THE TITANIC

Thus spoke, O Israel! All thy daughters' worth,
Great as this has been since thy race's birth,
Incarnate in one soul that fear defied!
This woman's glory, let it be thy pride,
And, as a token ye remember well,
When each shall journey o'er the ocean's swell,
And passing off the ridge that marks the banks
New Foundland claims and the Atlantic flanks,
Let each one drop a stone upon that wave
Where she once stood and which now marks her grave,
That all these stones together soon may rise
Three thousand fathoms up to meet the skies!
Though millions into millions must be rolled
To make this sum, let resolution hold;
For none deny the tribute due today,
Nor will the future its respects delay—
All love to aid to liquidate a debt
Incurred for such a lesson, such example set!

THE WRECK OF THE TITANIC

Upon the topmost deck all boats were stowed,
And here a few took in a partial load,
To then be lowered to the rail below
Where, orders were, the women all must go.
Here many men the present world knew well
Stood back and calmly waved their last farewell;
For education, worldly wisdom's gain
Had taught each one the pride which scorns all pain,
That he who yields to terror for his life
Saves what is hardly worth such lowly strife;
For never after may his spirit swell
With inner pride which each of us loves well—
This wastes away without its mother's mead,
"Few or none other would have done my deed,"
And lacking this we crawl away our time,
Hiding 'neath stones as worms enrapt in slime,
While he who dies unmoved, though well aware,
Mounts in this pride beyond all other men's compare!

THE WRECK OF THE TITANIC

One of these men a little boy befriends,
Who'd been turned back, and his distress soon ends;
For, clapping on his head a feathered hat,
"My lad, a woman now you are with that!"
And him, with many others, hands along
Into the boats from out the waiting throng.
They say that here a soldier proved his right
In modern times to spurs of ancient knight;
Ah! Major Butt, who envies not the name
You leave emblazoned on the role of fame!
May all of us partake that last farewell
You waved to one who knew and loved you well,
"Remember me to all the folks back home,
Goodbye, good luck be with you as you roam!"
And let us love and cherish with this man
All those whose valor made them of his clan—
The many heroes at whose names Report,
Subject to tyrant Chance, perhaps has never caught!

THE WRECK OF THE TITANIC

One brave, unselfish girl gave up her place
In a last boat, remained behind to face,
That no strange sister might step out for her,
All danger's threatenings, for the orders were
That one too many packed the fragile shell,
Which like a leaf hung trembling o'er the swell;
Then, though the cry resounded, "Lower away!"
The strong arms at the ropes a moment stay
As two babes in a blanket in are thrust,
Where willing arms receive the orphaned trust;
Down shoots the boat, but from a deck below
Outsprings a man, whose rushing body's blow
Strikes from her seat a woman o'er the side,
At whom some grasp, but sinks into the tide;
Within another, steadied at the rail,
Two just have stepped when, frenzied past avail
By rising waters which put them to rout,
A swarming crew of stokers seize and swing her out!

THE WRECK OF THE TITANIC

The boats are gone, half loaded it may be,
But whose the fault? In fear away they flee,
Forgetting those now left behind to drown,
Lest the now trembling wreck engulf them down—
All thought that's left to this they now devote,
None heed the order given, "When afloat,
All boats around the gang-way ladder bring,
There on your oars till further orders swing!"
Now all those left aboard realize their case;
How many took it let it be our place,
As far as we are guided by those tales
That reason may allow of what avails,
To here record as clearly as we can;
Rememb'ring always that we deal with man,
Not a Minerva from a god-head burst,
Nor one created perfect at the first,
But one who's ever moulded of the dust,
From which derive his actions, be they wrong or just!

THE WRECK OF THE TITANIC

When first the Captain knew the damage done
He ordered life-belts placed on every one,
And on the topmost deck, with gayest air,
The band to buoy all hearts against despair.
In music's strains depicted others woe,
By all the happy, may unheeded flow;
But when the real is felt in all its might,
With all its venom'd barbs in wildest flight,
The staunchest hearts to lightest notes will spring
To catch the tempo and so dull its sting!
And now, though many ragtime airs were played,
Still rally'ng were they to the heart dismayed;
Yet most of all was the example set
By those eight bandsmen, whom we'll ne'er forget!
While yet the tilting deck a foothold gave,
Rang out their dirge triumphant of the brave!
None more! for where should courage' acme lie
If not where death is calmly viewed approaching nigh!

THE WRECK OF THE TITANIC

Of course, in logic we may reason much
Of how so many 'scaped wild panic's clutch;
For very few, indeed, gave way to fear,
E'en when all knew catastrophe was near:
No crash was felt, to such a mighty blow
The inch steel plates gave way, as banks of snow
Before a plow's steel-clad oncoming beak,
And crumpled inward from the icy peak;
The air was calm, the ocean quiet lay,
The ship lay steadied in a normal way;
No gash was seen, and the increasing list,
The throbbing tremor of the engines missed,
The hiss of steam blown off, the rocket's glare,
Were all that told something had happened there;
The life-preservers and the boats were deemed
Precautions greater than the danger seemed;
Attentive apprehension held them all,
But no rude violence shocked and no strange scene appalled!

THE WRECK OF THE TITANIC

'Tis thus when illness 'thralls us we behave,
E'en though 'tis dragging to a certain grave,
And none cry out unless distress and pain,
By sudden onset, mastery obtain ;
Though what we dread most hangs but by a hair,
Yet all still feel that time and chance may spare ;
Mere fear of what's been never felt before
Seems in the future dim as ancient lore ;
Still the suspense upon the settling deck
Drives some to seek diversion's certain check,
Which, as a safety valve, lets out the press
Of swoll'n emotions when they most distress :
Within the smokers' cabin cards are seen,
The stakes much greater than before had been ;
They shuffle, deal, and play with nervous speed,
And for their game alone, it seems, have heed ;
No counters o'er the broadcloth's verdure roll,
Each here may win the prize, the prize of self-control !

THE WRECK OF THE TITANIC

The smoker's comfort steadies many friends,
And wine, that worry poison, also lends
Its force to those whose sluggish hearts require
Its power to drive, whose brains its added fire.
At exercises in the gymnasts' hall
Some raise the bells, and other roll the ball,
Pull at false oars, or ride the camel's back
O'er an imagined desert's sandy track;
Some stalwart souls supremely stoic stand,
Or hold a friend or brother by the hand;
In little groups are gathered, huddled near,
Some fathers, mothers, and their children dear—
For from the cabins some have missed the boats,
And of the steerage, a survivor notes,
But those the second cabin's fleet could share
Were of the lucky chancing choose to spare;
Spared but for other days, as woe but waits,
At every door, the juggling of the wanton Fates!

THE WRECK OF THE TITANIC

But scorn all comfort! help is past avail!
Deceit, though seeming pleasant, 's for the frail!
No balm 's in Gilead that can cause to bear
The stiffling process, death, unmoved, aware!
Call not for med'cine, no physician 's there,
But resolution which may make all dare!
'Tis sick'ning to the brave to half conceal
Amid unfelt phantasms what is real!
Far better 'tis to face the bitter truth,
Well knowing when for us there is no ruth!
This Murdock knows, and feels its heavy hand
That bears on him, on him who held command
When the great ship ripped off her bosom's shield,
And sixteen hundred's fate an instant sealed!
Until all boats were launched he hardly knew
The moments passed, so quickly 'round he flew;
A boat swung out and loaded, lowered away,
One after one his care saw safely under way!

THE WRECK OF THE TITANIC

And now the last boat in the tackle lies,
Stuck 'mid the davits whose defect denies
His ev'ry effort made to swing her free
O'er bulwarks fast descending to the sea!
Whate'er he could is done, this moment now
He owes himself, the last the Fates allow!
Small choice is his, to stiffen 'mid the ice,
Or die the master, neither may entice!
And yet 'tis comforting to know we hold
A power so absolute, when we are bold!
For bolder 'tis to face inflicted death,
When 'tis ourselves who speed the parting breath,
Than when it wins against the feeble strife
We may oppose, when most we crave for life!
Let him who 'Coward' cries, crawl to his end,
Bearing affliction that he dares not mend;
For still the more we live the greater grows
The dearth of pleasures and the sum of all our woes!

THE WRECK OF THE TITANIC

Murdock knew this, and yet he dared to find
A constant pleasure to please one e'er kind;
'Twas this he found the only holding tie
That interfered with his content to die—
Reciprocating love drives on two souls
Through much that 's bitter, for each ever holds
Fast to that purpose which most pleases both—
Affection binds those who'd neglect an oath—
To save the other from the world's annoy,
To add what might be to his dream of joy!
But Oh! 'tis ever, as 'twas now the trend
Of all contentment, woe lies at the end!
Thus is it wise t'entwine two fragile lives
So close that loss of one at once deprives
The other of that power to hope which gives
Inciting motive, without which who lives?
For her his heartache multiplied the pain
He felt for others sorrows, both now all in vain!

THE WRECK OF THE TITANIC

The ship now trembles in her final throe!
He must prepare, for with her he must go!
Were his such chance, escape he must deny,
He drove her on, and with her he must die!
One choice is his, he may anticipate,
Or, like one held for slaughter, dumbly wait!
A brain aw whirl, for action ever makes,
His case seems clear, so quick again he takes
That potent weapon which before he drew
To hold in check the maddened stoker crew;
Crack! goes the shell remaining, crack the shell
Where in such thoughts impetuous might not dwell!
Murdock, adieu, much honor on thy name,
May all thy fellows share immortal fame!
Self sped as thou, some say, were others too,
Their duty done, death all that lay in view—
Among immortals it might be a prize
More great than life eternal to our glazing eyes!

THE WRECK OF THE TITANIC

The wireless lads still splutter at their task,
Locate their ship and speedy rescue ask
Of all they reach, tell how the water gains;
But soon their efforts cease, the current wanes,
Stops short their signal, waves lap at their door,
The Captain shouts to tarry there no more!
But Phillips tries again, to danger blind,
And, as he works, a stoker creeps behind,
Unfasts his lifebelt, to his aid young Bride
Springs with a wrench, the thief floors at his side!
They quit their cabin, Phillips hastens aft,
While Bride joins some now tugging at a raft
Bestowed above the chartroom, which they throw
Upon the boat-deck now awash below;
The bow swings downward, all are washed afloat,
Most of its launchers clinging to the boat;
An instant later, falling on their track,
A monster funnel fell and threw her on her back!

THE WRECK OF THE TITANIC

Up to the bridge the bow is covered o'er,
Fast sinking in the water, more and more,
The ship must soon pass far below the wave;
This knows the Captain, one more yet he'll save!
So grasping tight an infant found astray,
Into the sea he plunges, swims away
Unto the nearest lifeboat standing by,
And hands within his charge to those who try
To next reach for him, but he waves them back,
Disdaining rescue he knows others lack!
"Where's Murdock? Cannot one within there tell?"
"He shot himself, I saw him when he fell!"
To this brave Captain Smith gives no reply,
Strips off his lifebelt, vents a single sigh,
And, facing for a moment toward his ship
Whose stern swings high, both in the ocean slip!
Good bye, good Captain, well you learnt in life
To meet the worst that comes to man in peace or strife!

While this was taking place Lightoller stood
Upon the Captain's quarters, near the hood
The fore lee blower swung to catch the air;
A moment pausing, hesitating there,
He feels the vessel's bow drop in the deep;
So, springing outward in a desperate leap,
He strives to clear t'engulfing wave's rebound,
But 'tis in vain, the suction drags him 'round;
Beneath the sea, again the blower 's near,
An airy gust ascending lifts him clear;
Once more submerged, the fiddley-grating feels;
But, ere his brain to suffocation yields,
Again a gaseous force blows him to light,
The stars before his eyes now set in night!
He sees the capsized boat, on it he crawls,
And views a scene his hardy heart appalls,
As others seek asylum on the raft,
Till thirty tightly pack t'unsteady, tiny craft!

THE WRECK OF THE TITANIC

The ship had settled while her list to port
But slowly grew, and lapping waters sought
The upper deck, along her sloping side,
As gently rising o'er some shore, the tide;
Her bow first under, glowing port-holes shone
In lines aslant to meet the liquid zone,
One after one cut off, as lower yet
They passed beneath where air and water met.
At last, when ripples reached the chartroom door,
And while abaft the deck was covered o'er
With surging crowds, no longer held in check,
Each class apart on its appropri'ate deck;
While still our bandsmen played, undaunted, there,
And notes of "Autumn" thrilled the chilly air;
The prow swung downward, high the rudder reared,
The lights went out, the end to all appeared;
For from the trembling wreck was heard a roar,
As loosened engines, crashing, through her entrails tore!

THE WRECK OF THE TITANIC

The engineers! who gives them e'en a thought?
So often 'tis when simple duty 's wrought
Where none may see, none clarion forth in praise,
Nor note the merit in the after days.
No wonder, then, some hope for just reward
From abstract justice, which they name the Lord!
Our hope obscures, our pride denies, our fate,
While Cosmos yawns and cleans again her slate!
The thirty engineers, and more, remained
Below to labor, ev'ry chance disdained!
For here they knew escape might never hap,
And vain their efforts 'gainst the lengthy gap!
They drove the pumps, and drew each fire when neared
The rising water; till the last they cheered
All those above with that great solace, light;
Kept till the end the ship illumined bright!
Then with their engines crashing to their grave!
Could ever men more merit, could they be more brave?

THE WRECK OF THE TITANIC

Almost upright the keel a moment stands,
While some still cling to railings with their hands,
And sparks from out an after funnel leap;
But for a moment though, for dipping deep,
Almost as softly as the stricken duck
That diving cheats the sportsman of his luck,
The great Titanic sinks to vales below,
Where o'er her grave two miles of ocean flow!
One sprang from off the poop, just as she sped,
Saw her enormous screws just miss his head;
And, swimming to the bottom-upturned boat,
Crawled on, the last who thus was kept afloat.
How died the sixteen hundred left behind,
Each in a futile life preserver 'twined?
Let tell the tale a bride who fondly thought
In later boats than hers all would be brought;
Let her repeat the record scored by pain;
A record, let us hope, will ne'er be writ again!

THE WRECK OF THE TITANIC

“I sat benumbed beside an idle oar,
Within a boat 'round which were gathered more,
Benumbed by thought that all so strange excites
Until its raging, through fatigue, requites;
I saw the ship, in silence, settle fast;
No voice, no sound; I saw her sink at last!
'My love, with others, now is safe afloat,
'Somewhere around, within another boat,'
I heard one say, and so we all believed;
But for a moment, though, were so deceived;
For o'er the water from the mile away
A cry resounded unto where we lay;
A cry, Oh God! must I describe the sound,
The yelps of dogs, in frightful medley wound!
It rose, it fell, in gasps then came again,
The dying protest of those freezing men!
The horror of that moment thrills me yet,
And none who heard that cry, while living can forget!

THE WRECK OF THE TITANIC

To think, but ah, what now avails the thought!
A few more boats, such life were cheaply bought!
Those who survived, as I, were spared the pain,
That numbing ache from which escape is vain!
Of life prolonged beyond ambition's death,
Whose drag's increased by each succeeding breath.
Yet time e'en this will cure, a hundred years
Will carry all beyond their utmost fears;
One then as all will be, true friends or foes,
Where pleasures lead so also will our woes!
This is so near, the weary should take heart,
None, none should fear the ending as the start!
Yet Oh! why reason thus, while still I crave
That dear companion whom I could not save!
Thou demon, Cannot, sere no more my brain!
Forgetfulness, haste thou to ease my pain!
But no, what use is logic 'gainst the will,
For dear Remembrance is my constant idol still!"

THE WRECK OF THE TITANIC

Upon the capsized boat the thirty crowd,
So tightly packed no room to move 's allowed—
The wireless boys are here, and also two
Who had been passengers, the rest were crew—
While gasping men swim up and turn away,
Their feeble question hoarsely answered, nay;
Such visits cease, the icy water's chill
Soon stiffens muscles and benumbs the will,
And then around but nodding corpses float,
Who've lost the cares of those upon the boat!
These, all awash and soaked with frigid brine,
Arrange themselves along the keel in line;
And back to back, with water to their knees,
Await a rescue or their turn to freeze!
But some too weak to stand lie half afloat,
Jack Phillips one, one in a soldier's coat,
Who soon relax and slip into the sea;
Exhaustion overcoming frail mortality!

THE WRECK OF THE TITANIC

Some lifeboats, clustered near a mile away,
About a lantern lashed together lay;
None ventured back, although all heard the cry—
The cry that called for aid on all nearby!
Some were too full, and some had none to row;
At least 'tis argued thus they could not go;
They managed, still, to reach their mooring place,
And, later, even to move off a space.
Of women some held all but three or four;
One boat a man in woman's clothing bore;
In one eight Chinamen themselves bestowed;
And few among them all had ever rowed.
'Tis certain many seemed completely dazed,
And some, perhaps, the moment even crazed;
For, as one boat moved from its launching place,
A woman struck a swimmer on the face;
And, when the others hauled him in the boat,
His cheek was bloody where her diamonded hand had smote!

THE WRECK OF THE TITANIC

A human heart at last asserts its sway!
The selfish brain, abashed, in one gives way!
And Lowe transfers to boats but partly filled,
Against protests effected as he willed,
His load of souls, unfurls his little sail,
And makes for whence no longer comes a wail;
But three he finds afloat and yet alive,
So few an hour, it seems, could thus survive;
And one of these, is it not strange to note,
Is very drunk when drawn aboard the boat;
Perhaps he thought 'twould make a faint heart bold,
Or warm him 'gainst the water's icy cold!
Now back again the lifeboat's helm is set,
Without sufficient search, else had it met
The silent thirty floating on the keel,
Now so benumbed that they have ceased to feel!
Yet back in time to opportunely save
A leaking lifeboat's load fast sinking in the wave!

THE WRECK OF THE TITANIC

Now must all wait, no power but this is theirs;
The land 's beyond their reach, starvation stares
A few days off at most, and should the sea
Arise in fury, helpless all would be!
But still they comfort, all had heard before
That sev'ral ships hard on their reck'nings bore;
Perhaps ere daylight one may reach the place,
So through the glimmer peers each eager face.
What is that light which glitters now afar!
Is it a vessel? no, another star;
Another one of those afar-off-things
That thoughts of other than the present brings
In streaming light, which by our blinking eyes
From dimmest past to distant future flies;
May one imagine how it had its birth,
Or where its flashes end that pass our earth?
A link within the circle of Always
Which none may measure, counted in our tale of days!

THE WRECK OF THE TITANIC

Horizon to the zenith shone this night,
So clear the air, with ev'ry starry light;
E'en where the arching sky the water met,
Some twinkled o'er the edge, while others set,
Abruptly dipping on the western side
As though their pathway led below the tide.
And oft deceived by these were those who sought
To be the first to spy the succor brought;
Yet on they watch; at last a glow is seen,
Perhaps the moon, is that her silvery sheen?
Now just above the water peeps the light,
And its reflection breaks upon their sight
In glancing rays along the sleeping sea;
If not the moon, perhaps, Oh, it must be—
Oh, yes it is, for see the rocket rise,
In wav'ring lines ascend into the skies—
They hear its boom soon follow from afar—
Suspended breaths escaping all in chorused "AH!"

THE WRECK OF THE TITANIC

Some minutes short of midnight came the blow,
At two-and-twenty she had sunk below;
And now two hours later comes that aid
The wireless summoned that Marconi made—
Great credit be to him, and unto all
Who helped develop the electric call
That sped to Captain Rostron on his way
Some sixty miles of ocean off, they say;
And unto him, this captain, brave and true,
What credit could repay one-half his due!
Who drove his ship by 'bergs, through fields of ice,
Far off her course, alone for honor's price!
Yet pause to think, he best loves honor's mead
Who most is worthy, does the noblest deed;
And this, which needs no eulogistic phrase
To place with those far past the reach of praise,
Exalts this man to ever rank with those
All class, revere, or even worship as heroes!

THE WRECK OF THE TITANIC

Meanwhile the ship, her searchlight glowing bright,
Approaches nearer to an outhung light
One boat displays, with slow and cautious tread;
But ere 'tis reached an iceberg stops her dead.
Manoeuv'ring 'round, the sea is free between,
Where she awaits the swaying light of green;
Alongside soon, while spreads the morning's glow,
The rescued scale a ladder from below;
While at the rail the Captain and his crew,
And of the steamer's passengers a few,
Extend the care and welcome they require;
Help all within, unto their least desire.
The dawning now discloses 'round the place
A troop of icebergs, o'er the water's face
The sixteen boats approaching from between;
The stars are fading, but the moon is seen
Just rising o'er a peak of glowing ice—
The scene indeed was thrilling, Oh, at such a price!

THE WRECK OF THE TITANIC

One of the lifeboats met, just ere the dawn,
Those floating on the raft so cold and worn
That two died after transfer, three were sent
Aboard the saving liner so far spent
The little lifeflame left them flickered out
Before, almost, her bow was put about ;
Although the others, saving very few
Who'd been frostbitten, had a bruise or two,
Of all the five and seven hundred saved,
Were very well and normally behaved ;
E'en those who'd lost a loved one in the wreck
Could but feel thankful on a solid deck ;
And most of these still hoped for many a day
He had been saved in some yet unknown way.
With all aboard, the steamer cruised around
In hope that others living might be found ;
Some tables, chairs, a hatchway grate, afloat,
Was all, 'tis said, they saw, besides the o'erturned boat.

THE WRECK OF THE TITANIC

And yet some hours later there were found,
Still floating upright, life-preserver bound,
Four hundred corpses o'er the same area,
By those expressly sent to seek them here.
As if to saddest things to further add,
For past extremity there's naught more sad,
These also caught beneath a crested wave,
That rocked it gently in its cradled grave,
A naked babe, lost from the mother's breast,
Who doubtless till the last had closely pressed,
And, ere it fell from out her helpless arms,
Had deeply drunk of euthanasia's balms;
Who was she, none could tell, a thousand more,
With her, the ship into the ocean bore;
Some clung to railings, some, 'tis but surmise,
Were waked by rushing waters, in surprise,
Or else were suffocated in their sleep
When she plunged headlong far beneath t' o'erwhelming deep!

THE WRECK OF THE TITANIC

And further on, a father with his arm
Around his boy, a shield from threat'ning harm;
Though chilled to death both yet retained their grasp,
Locked firmer still with each expiring gasp!
And there, a mother holding o'er her head,
Above the freezing waters both had sped,
The cherished child she had not power to save,
Though all her strength upheld it from the wave!
How did she comfort it, what did she say,
Before exhaustion stole her speech away?
What could she promise then, how ease its fright,
Alone, 'mid chilling waters, in the night?
Oh, what can you, or I, or anyone
Bespeak their offspring ere the future 's run!
A fate unknown, a little breathing space,
But the same end though varied be the race!
The choice is small, although we know it not,
Because all live to die, and dying have forgot!

THE WRECK OF THE TITANIC

Renewed 's the journey, from the icy peaks
Along a lengthy floe Carpathia seeks
The open sea—Ah, had they known this strand
Was floating near, so easy 'twas to land,
Another story might have been to tell—
And, after three days more upon the swell,
Lands the forlorn, though grateful, folk at last,
Where we shall leave them, sheltered in the vast
Outpourings of a sympathetic world—
Not that with mourning banner wide unfurled,
More for its selfish self than the bereaved—
But it whose tear apart, and want relieved
Help all to feel there is a home yet left
Where there 's e'en solace for the most bereft—
For that poor child who searched the steamer through,
“I do not see them,” and the widowed too—
By this's not meant to what befell that day
One could be reconciled, or aught such loss repay!

THE WRECK OF THE TITANIC

Among those scenes intense emotion swayed
Upon the landing pier two may not fade;
They show so well the careless hand of Fate
That strikes on this too soon, on that too late:
The pale young girl who waited through the night,
Beside the empty gangway till daylight;
Whom she expected, none could make her say,
But shook her head and watched the vacant way;
She spoke to none, and none dared press her more,
None saw her leave for all left long before;
Within her breast such silent sorrow slept
She doubtless feared to loose as those who wept.
Alone she came, alone she stood apart;
Alone she left in loneliness of heart!
Hers never came, another stepped ashore,
A bent old man whose gaze was fixed before;
None came for him, he looked to neither side,
And straightway fled the scene with hastened lengthy stride!

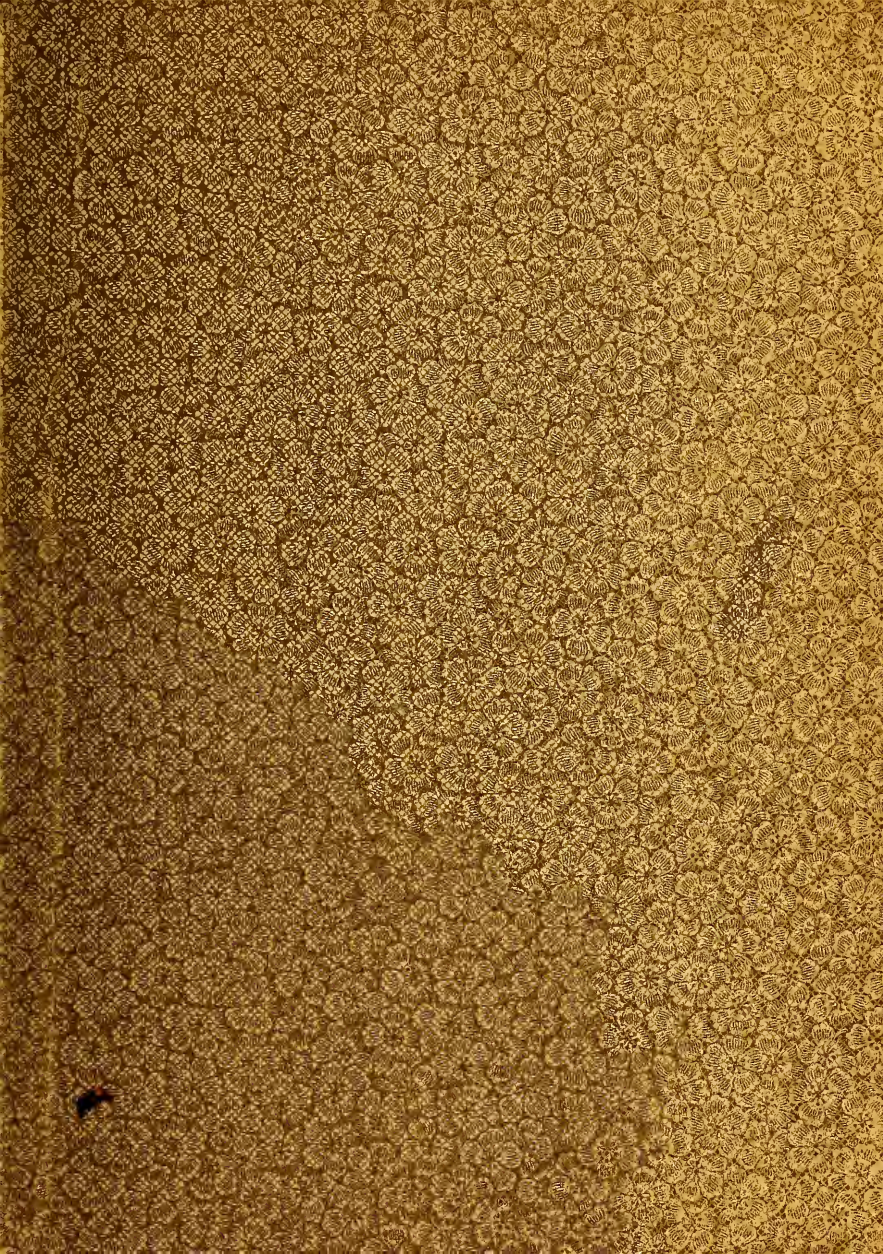
THE WRECK OF THE TITANIC

Since early time we've wished to turn all blame,
And so a 'scapegoat takes at least the name ;
Thus here, some say, the Captain went too fast,
Or that the builders built her far too vast ;
Reproach the line for placing boats so few
That all could never enter them, it knew ;
Forgetting, first, demand, and then, the law
That specified but what the vessel bore.
Forbear to censure, fear 'twill hap again,
Blame no one singly for the fault of men ;
Nor weep today for what is past redress,
For 'twill but add a new to old distress.
Let those who lost their loved ones know again
The best that haps to all postpones their pain ;
That those who've gone may never feel it more,
But we who linger have it e'er in store ;
Howe'er we play, at last we lose, the same,
And when most lucky may but chose the final game !

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