

## Sea Pieces

### THE HAGLETS

By chapel bare, with walls sea-beat  
The lichened urns in wilds are lost  
About a carved memorial stone  
That shows, decayed and coral-mossed,  
A form recumbent, swords at feet,  
Trophies at head, and kelp for a  
winding-sheet.

I invoke thy ghost, neglected fane,  
Washed by the waters' long lament;  
I adjure the recumbent effigy  
To tell the cenotaph's intent--  
Reveal why fagotted swords are at feet,  
Why trophies appear and weeds are the  
winding-sheet.

By open ports the Admiral sits,  
And shares repose with guns that tell  
Of power that smote the arm'd Plate Fleet

Whose sinking flag-ship's colors fell;  
But over the Admiral floats in light  
His squadron's flag, the red-cross Flag  
of the White.

The eddying waters whirl astern,  
The prow, a seedsman, sows the spray;  
With bellying sails and buckling spars  
The black hull leaves a Milky Way;  
Her timbers thrill, her batteries roll,  
She revelling speeds exulting with pennon  
at pole,

But ah, for standards captive trailed  
For all their scutcheoned castles' pride--  
Castilian towers that dominate Spain,  
Naples, and either Ind beside;  
Those haughty towers, armorial ones,  
Rue the salute from the Admiral's dens  
of guns.

Ensigns and arms in trophy brave,  
Braver for many a rent and scar,  
The captor's naval hall bedeck,  
Spoil that insures an earldom's star--  
Toledo's great, grand draperies, too,

Spain's steel and silk, and splendors from  
Peru.

But crippled part in splintering fight,  
The vanquished flying the victor's flags,  
With prize-crews, under convoy-guns,  
Heavy the fleet from Opher drags--  
The Admiral crowding sail ahead,  
Foremost with news who foremost in conflict  
sped.

But out from cloistral gallery dim,  
In early night his glance is thrown;  
He marks the vague reserve of heaven,  
He feels the touch of ocean lone;  
Then turns, in frame part undermined,  
Nor notes the shadowing wings that fan  
behind.

There, peaked and gray, three haglets fly,  
And follow, follow fast in wake  
Where slides the cabin-lustre shy,  
And sharks from man a glamour take,  
Seething along the line of light  
In lane that endless rules the war-ship's flight.

The sea-fowl here, whose hearts none know,  
They followed late the flag-ship quelled,  
(As now the victor one) and long  
Above her gurgling grave, shrill held  
With screams their wheeling rites--then sped  
Direct in silence where the victor led.

Now winds less fleet, but fairer, blow,  
A ripple laps the coppered side,  
While phosphor sparks make ocean gleam,  
Like camps lit up in triumph wide;  
With lights and tinkling cymbals meet  
Acclaiming seas the advancing conqueror  
greet.

But who a flattering tide may trust,  
Or favoring breeze, or aught in end?--  
Careening under startling blasts  
The sheeted towers of sails impend;  
While, gathering bale, behind is bred  
A livid storm-bow, like a rainbow dead.

At trumpet-call the topmen spring;  
And, urged by after-call in stress,  
Yet other tribes of tars ascend  
The rigging's howling wilderness;

But ere yard-ends alert they win,  
Hell rules in heaven with hurricane-fire  
and din.

The spars, athwart at spiry height,  
Like quaking Lima's crosses rock;  
Like bees the clustering sailors cling  
Against the shrouds, or take the shock  
Flat on the swept yard-arms aslant,  
Dipped like the wheeling condor's pinions  
gaunt.

A LULL! and tongues of languid flame  
Lick every boom, and lambent show  
Electric 'gainst each face aloft;  
The herds of clouds with bellowings go:  
The black ship rears--beset--harassed,  
Then plunges far with luminous antlers vast.

In trim betimes they turn from land,  
Some shivered sails and spars they stow;  
One watch, dismissed, they troll the can,  
While loud the billow thumps the bow--  
Vies with the fist that smites the board,  
Obstreperous at each reveller's jovial word.

Of royal oak by storms confirmed,  
The tested hull her lineage shows:  
Vainly the plungings whelm her prow--  
She rallies, rears, she sturdier grows:  
Each shot-hole plugged, each storm-sail home,  
With batteries housed she rams the watery  
dome.

DIM seen adrift through driving scud,  
The wan moon shows in plight forlorn;  
Then, pinched in visage, fades and fades  
Like to the faces drowned at morn,  
When deeps engulfed the flag-ship's crew,  
And, shrilling round, the inscrutable haglets  
flew.

And still they fly, nor now they cry,  
But constant fan a second wake,  
Unflagging pinions ply and ply,  
Abreast their course intent they take;  
Their silence marks a stable mood,  
They patient keep their eager neighborhood.

Plumed with a smoke, a confluent sea,  
Heaved in a combing pyramid full,  
Spent at its climax, in collapse

Down headlong thundering stuns the hull:  
The trophy drops; but, reared again,  
Shows Mars' high-altar and contemns the  
    main.

REBUILT it stands, the brag of arms,  
Transferred in site--no thought of where  
The sensitive needle keeps its place,  
And starts, disturbed, a quiverer there;  
The helmsman rubs the clouded glass--  
Peers in, but lets the trembling portent pass.

Let pass as well his shipmates do  
(Whose dream of power no tremors jar)  
Fears for the fleet convoyed astern:  
"Our flag they fly, they share our star;  
Spain's galleons great in hull are stout:  
Manned by our men--like us they'll ride it  
    out."

Tonight's the night that ends the week--  
Ends day and week and month and year:  
A fourfold imminent flickering time,  
For now the midnight draws anear:  
Eight bells! and passing-bells they be--  
The Old year fades, the Old Year dies at sea.

He launched them well. But shall the New  
Redeem the pledge the Old Year made,  
Or prove a self-asserting heir?  
But healthy hearts few qualms invade:  
By shot-chests grouped in bays 'tween guns  
The gossips chat, the grizzled, sea-beat ones.

And boyish dreams some graybeards blab:  
"To sea, my lads, we go no more  
Who share the Acapulco prize;  
We'll all night in, and bang the door;  
Our ingots red shall yield us bliss:  
Lads, golden years begin to-night with this!"

Released from deck, yet waiting call,  
Glazed caps and coats baptized in storm,  
A watch of Laced Sleeves round the board  
Draw near in heart to keep them warm:  
"Sweethearts and wives!" clink, clink, they  
meet,  
And, quaffing, dip in wine their beards of  
sleet.  
"Ay, let the star-light stay withdrawn,  
So here her hearth-light memory fling,  
So in this wine-light cheer be born,



And honor's fellowship weld our ring--  
Honor! our Admiral's aim foretold:

A tomb or a trophy, and lo, 't is a trophy and  
gold!"

But he, a unit, sole in rank,  
Apart needs keep his lonely state,  
The sentry at his guarded door  
Mute as by vault the sculptured Fate;  
Belted he sits in drowsy light,  
And, hatted, nods--the Admiral of the White.

He dozes, aged with watches passed--  
Years, years of pacing to and fro;  
He dozes, nor attends the stir  
In bullioned standards rustling low,  
Nor minds the blades whose secret thrill  
Perverts overhead the magnet's Polar will:--

LESS heeds the shadowing three that play  
And follow, follow fast in wake,  
Untiring wing and lidless eye--  
Abreast their course intent they take;  
Or sigh or sing, they hold for good  
The unvarying flight and fixed inveterate  
mood.

In dream at last his dozings merge,  
In dream he reaps his victor's fruit;  
The Flags-o'-the-Blue, the Flags-o'-the-Red,  
Dipped flags of his country's fleets salute  
His Flag-o'-the-White in harbor proud--  
But why should it blench? Why turn to a  
    painted shroud?

The hungry seas they hound the hull,  
The sharks they dog the haglets' flight;  
With one consent the winds, the waves  
In hunt with fins and wings unite,  
While drear the harps in cordage sound  
Remindful wails for old Armadas drowned.

Ha--yonder! are they Northern Lights?  
Or signals flashed to warn or ward?  
Yea, signals lanced in breakers high;  
But doom on warning follows hard:  
While yet they veer in hope to shun,  
They strike! and thumps of hull and heart are  
    one.

But beating hearts a drum-beat calls  
And prompt the men to quarters go;

Discipline, curbing nature, rules--  
Heroic makes who duty know:  
They execute the trump's command,  
Or in peremptory places wait and stand.

Yet cast about in blind amaze--  
As through their watery shroud they peer:  
"We tacked from land: then how betrayed?  
Have currents swerved us--snared us here?"  
None heed the blades that clash in place  
Under lamps dashed down that lit the  
magnet's case.

Ah, what may live, who mighty swim,  
Or boat-crew reach that shore forbid,  
Or cable span? Must victors drown--  
Perish, even as the vanquished did?  
Man keeps from man the stifled moan;  
They shouldering stand, yet each in heart  
how lone.

Some heaven invoke; but rings of reefs  
Prayer and despair alike deride  
In dance of breakers forked or peaked,  
Pale maniacs of the maddened tide;  
While, strenuous yet some end to earn,

The haglets spin, though now no more astern.

Like shuttles hurrying in the looms  
Aloft through rigging frayed they ply--  
Cross and recross--weave and inweave,  
Then lock the web with clinching cry  
Over the seas on seas that clasp  
The weltering wreck where gurgling ends the  
gasp.

Ah, for the Plate-Fleet trophy now,  
The victor's voucher, flags and arms;  
Never they'll hang in Abbey old  
And take Time's dust with holier palms;  
Nor less content, in liquid night,  
Their captor sleeps--the Admiral of the  
White.

Imbedded deep with shells  
And drifted treasure deep,  
Forever he sinks deeper in  
Unfathomable sleep--  
His cannon round him thrown,  
His sailors at his feet,  
The wizard sea enchanting them  
Where never haglets beat.

On nights when meteors play  
And light the breakers dance,  
The Oreads from the caves  
With silvery elves advance;  
And up from ocean stream,  
And down from heaven far,  
The rays that blend in dream  
The abysm and the star.

## THE AEOLIAN HARP

### At The Surf Inn

List the harp in window wailing  
    Stirred by fitful gales from sea:  
Shrieking up in mad crescendo--  
    Dying down in plaintive key!

Listen: less a strain ideal  
Than Ariel's rendering of the Real.  
    What that Real is, let hint  
    A picture stamped in memory's mint.

Braced well up, with beams aslant,  
Betwixt the continents sails the Phocion,  
For Baltimore bound from Alicant.  
Blue breezy skies white fleeces fleck  
Over the chill blue white-capped ocean:  
From yard-arm comes--"Wreck ho, a  
    wreck!"

Dismasted and adrift,  
Longtime a thing forsaken;  
Overwashed by every wave  
Like the slumbering kraken;  
Heedless if the billow roar,

Oblivious of the lull,  
Leagues and leagues from shoal or shore,  
It swims--a levelled hull:  
Bulwarks gone--a shaven wreck,  
Nameless and a grass-green deck.  
A lumberman: perchance, in hold

Prostrate pines with hemlocks rolled.

It has drifted, waterlogged,  
Till by trailing weeds beclugged:  
    Drifted, drifted, day by day,  
    Pilotless on pathless way.

It has drifted till each plank  
Is oozy as the oyster-bank:  
    Drifted, drifted, night by night,  
    Craft that never shows a light;  
Nor ever, to prevent worse knell,  
Tolls in fog the warning bell.

From collision never shrinking,  
Drive what may through darksome smother;  
Saturate, but never sinking,  
Fatal only to the other!  
    Deadlier than the sunken reef  
Since still the snare it shifteth,

Torpid in dumb ambushade  
Waylayingly it drifteth.

O, the sailors--O, the sails!  
O, the lost crews never heard of!  
Well the harp of Ariel wails  
Thought that tongue can tell no word of!



TO THE MASTER OF THE METEOR

Lonesome on earth's loneliest deep,  
Sailor! who dost thy vigil keep--  
Off the Cape of Storms dost musing sweep  
Over monstrous waves that curl and comb;  
Of thee we think when here from brink  
We blow the mead in bubbling foam.

Of thee we think, in a ring we link;  
To the shearer of ocean's fleece we drink,  
And the Meteor rolling home.

FAR OFF-SHORE

Look, the raft, a signal flying,  
Thin--a shred;  
None upon the lashed spars lying,  
Quick or dead.

Cries the sea-fowl, hovering over,  
"Crew, the crew?"  
And the billow, reckless, rover,  
Sweeps anew!

## THE MAN-OF-WAR HAWK

Yon black man-of-war-hawk that wheels in  
the light

O'er the black ship's white sky-s'l, sunned  
cloud to the sight,

Have we low-flyers wings to ascend to his  
height?

No arrow can reach him; nor thought can  
attain

To the placid supreme in the sweep of his  
reign.

## THE FIGURE-HEAD

The Charles-and-Emma seaward sped,  
(Named from the carven pair at prow,  
He so smart, and a curly head,  
She tricked forth as a bride knows how:  
Pretty stem for the port, I trow!

But iron-rust and alum-spray  
And chafing gear, and sun and dew  
Vexed this lad and lassie gay,  
Tears in their eyes, salt tears nor few;  
And the hug relaxed with the failing glue.

But came in end a dismal night,  
With creaking beams and ribs that groan,  
A black lee-shore and waters white:  
Dropped on the reef, the pair lie prone:  
O, the breakers dance, but the winds they  
moan!

## THE GOOD CRAFT SNOW BIRD

Strenuous need that head-wind be  
From purposed voyage that drives at last  
The ship, sharp-braced and dogged still,  
Beating up against the blast.

Brigs that figs for market gather,  
Homeward-bound upon the stretch,  
Encounter oft this uglier weather  
Yet in end their port they fetch.

Mark yon craft from sunny Smyrna  
Glazed with ice in Boston Bay;  
Out they toss the fig-drums cheerly,  
Livelier for the frosty ray.

What if sleet off-shore assailed her,  
What though ice yet plate her yards;  
In wintry port not less she renders  
Summer's gift with warm regards!

And, look, the underwriters' man,  
Timely, when the stevedore's done,  
Puts on his specs to pry and scan,  
And sets her down--A, No. 1.

Bravo, master! Bravo, brig!  
For slanting snows out of the West  
Never the Snow-Bird cares one fig;  
And foul winds steady her, though a pest.

OLD COUNSEL

Of The Young Master of a Wrecked California Clipper

Come out of the Golden Gate,

Go round the Horn with streamers,

Carry royals early and late;

But, brother, be not over-elate--

All hands save ship! has startled dreamers.

THE TUFT OF KELP

All dripping in tangles green,

Cast up by a lonely sea

If purer for that, O Weed,

Bitterer, too, are ye?



## THE MALDIVE SHARK

About the Shark, phlegmatical one,  
Pale sot of the Maldive sea,  
The sleek little pilot-fish, azure and slim,  
How alert in attendance be.  
From his saw-pit of mouth, from his charnel  
    of maw  
They have nothing of harm to dread,  
But liquidly glide on his ghastly flank  
Or before his Gorgonian head:  
Or lurk in the port of serrated teeth  
In white triple tiers of glittering gates,  
And there find a haven when peril's abroad,  
An asylum in jaws of the Fates!  
They are friends; and friendly they guide him  
    to prey,  
Yet never partake of the treat--  
Eyes and brains to the dotard lethargic and  
    dull,  
Pale ravener of horrible meat.

TO NED

Where is the world we roved, Ned Bunn?

Hollows thereof lay rich in shade

By voyagers old inviolate thrown

Ere Paul Pry cruised with Pelf and Trade.

To us old lads some thoughts come home

Who roamed a world young lads no more shall  
roam.

Nor less the satiate year impends

When, wearying of routine-resorts,

The pleasure-hunter shall break loose,

Ned, for our Pantheistic ports:--

Marquesas and glenned isles that be

Authentic Edens in a Pagan sea.

The charm of scenes untried shall lure,

And, Ned, a legend urge the flight--

The Typee-truants under stars

Unknown to Shakespere's Midsummer-

Night;

And man, if lost to Saturn's Age,

Yet feeling life no Syrian pilgrimage.

But, tell, shall he, the tourist, find

Our isles the same in violet-glow  
Enamoring us what years and years--  
Ah, Ned, what years and years ago!  
Well, Adam advances, smart in pace,  
But scarce by violets that advance you trace.

But we, in anchor-watches calm,  
The Indian Psyche's languor won,  
And, musing, breathed primeval balm  
From Edens ere yet overrun;  
Marvelling mild if mortal twice,  
Here and hereafter, touch a Paradise.

## CROSSING THE TROPICS

From "The Saya-y-Manto."

While now the Pole Star sinks from sight

The Southern Cross it climbs the sky;

But losing thee, my love, my light,

O bride but for one bridal night,

The loss no rising joys supply.

Love, love, the Trade Winds urge abaft,

And thee, from thee, they steadfast waft.

By day the blue and silver sea

And chime of waters blandly fanned--

Nor these, nor Gama's stars to me

May yield delight since still for thee

I long as Gama longed for land.

I yearn, I yearn, reverting turn,

My heart it streams in wake astern

When, cut by slanting sleet, we swoop

Where raves the world's inverted year,

If roses all your porch shall loop,

Not less your heart for me will droop

Doubling the world's last outpost drear.

O love, O love, these oceans vast:

Love, love, it is as death were past!

## THE BERG

### A Dream

I SAW a ship of martial build  
(Her standards set, her brave apparel on)  
Directed as by madness mere  
Against a stolid iceberg steer,  
Nor budge it, though the infatuate ship went  
    down.

The impact made huge ice-cubes fall  
Sullen, in tons that crashed the deck;  
But that one avalanche was all  
No other movement save the foundering  
    wreck.

Along the spurs of ridges pale,  
Not any slenderest shaft and frail,  
A prism over glass--green gorges lone,  
Toppled; nor lace of trceries fine,  
Nor pendant drops in grot or mine  
Were jarred, when the stunned ship went  
    down.

Nor sole the gulls in cloud that wheeled  
Circling one snow-flanked peak afar,  
But nearer fowl the floes that skimmed  
And crystal beaches, felt no jar.

No thrill transmitted stirred the lock  
Of jack-straw needle-ice at base;  
Towers undermined by waves--the block  
A tilt impending--kept their place.  
Seals, dozing sleek on sliddery ledges  
Slept never, when by loftier edges  
Through very inertia overthrown,  
The impetuous ship in bafflement went down.  
Hard Berg (methought), so cold, so vast,  
With mortal damps self-overcast;  
Exhaling still thy dankish breath--  
Adrift dissolving, bound for death;  
Though lumpish thou, a lumbering one--  
A lumbering lubbard loitering slow,  
Impingers rue thee and go down,  
Sounding thy precipice below,  
Nor stir the slimy slug that sprawls  
Along thy dense stolidity of walls.

THE ENVIABLE ISLES

From "Rammon."

Through storms you reach them and from  
    storms are free.

Afar descried, the foremost drear in hue,  
But, nearer, green; and, on the marge, the sea  
    Makes thunder low and mist of rainbowed  
    dew.

But, inland, where the sleep that folds the hills  
A dreamier sleep, the trance of God, instills--  
    On uplands hazed, in wandering airs  
    aswoon,  
Slow-swaying palms salute love's cypress tree  
    Adown in vale where pebbly runlets croon  
A song to lull all sorrow and all glee.

Sweet-fern and moss in many a glade are here.  
    Where, strewn in flocks, what cheek-flushed  
    myriads lie  
Dimpling in dream--unconscious slumberers  
    mere,  
While billows endless round the beaches die.



## PEBBLES

### I

Though the Clerk of the Weather insist,  
And lay down the weather-law,  
Pintado and gannet they wist  
That the winds blow whither they list  
In tempest or flaw.

### II

Old are the creeds, but stale the schools,  
Revamped as the mode may veer,  
But Orm from the schools to the beaches  
strays  
And, finding a Conch hoar with time, he  
delays  
And reverent lifts it to ear.  
That Voice, pitched in far monotone,  
Shall it swerve? shall it deviate ever?  
The Seas have inspired it, and Truth--  
Truth, varying from sameness never.

### III

In hollows of the liquid hills

Where the long Blue Ridges run,  
The flattery of no echo thrills,  
For echo the seas have none;  
Nor aught that gives man back man's strain--  
The hope of his heart, the dream in his brain.

IV

On ocean where the embattled fleets repair,  
Man, suffering inflictor, sails on sufferance  
there.

V

Implacable I, the old Implacable Sea:  
Implacable most when most I smile serene--  
Pleased, not appeased, by myriad wrecks in  
me.

VI

Curled in the comb of yon billow Andean,  
Is it the Dragon's heaven-challenging crest?  
Elemental mad ramping of ravening waters--  
Yet Christ on the Mount, and the dove in  
her nest!

VII

Healed of my hurt, I laud the inhuman Sea--

Yea, bless the Angels Four that there convene;  
For healed I am ever by their pitiless breath  
Distilled in wholesome dew named rosmarine.