

FROM THE LIPS OF THE SEA

CLINTON SCOLLARD*

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 If thou wouldst win the rhythmic heart of things,
Go sit in solitude beside the shore,
Giving thine ear to the eternal roar
And every mystic message that it brings;—
Eddas of ancient, unremembered kings,
And runes that ring with long-forgotten lore,

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All myths and mysteries from the years of yore
Ere Time grew weary on his journeyings.

And more from that imperious sibyl, Sea,
Thou mayest learn if thou wilt hearken well,
When God's white star-fires beacon home the ships;
The solemn secrets of infinity,
Unto the inner sense translatable,
Hang trembling ever on her darkling lips._

SEA MARVELS

This morning more mysterious seems the sea
Than yesterday when, with reverberant roar,
It charged upon the beaches, and the sky
Above it shimmered cloudless. Now the waves
Lap languorously along the foamless sand,
And till the far horizon swims in mist.
Out of this murk, across this oily sweep,
Might lost armadas grandly sail to shore;
Jason might oar on Argo, or the stern
Surge-wanderer from Ithaca's bleak isle
Break on the sight, or Viking prows appear,
And still not waken wonder. Aye, the sound
Of siren singing might drift o'er the main,
And yet not fall upon amazed ears!
The soul is ripe for marvels. O great deep,
Give up your host of stately presences,
Adventurers and sea-heroes of old time,
And let them pass before us down the day
In proud procession, so that we who hear
Dull bells mark off the uneventful hours
May glimpse the bygone bravery of the world
Now moiling in its multitudinous marts,
Forgetful of fair faith and high resolve
In the inglorious grapple after gold!

THE MIST AND THE SEA

The mist crept in from the sea
Out of the void and the vast;
And it bore the silver rain
A shimmering guest in its train,
And many a murmuring strain
Of the ships that sailed in the past;
Soft as sleep's footfalls be
The mist crept in from the sea.

The mist crept in from the sea
And folded the length of the shore

In the clasp of its mothering arms
As though it would shield from harms;
And lulled were the loud alarms,
And lost was the rage and roar
Of the surge, so soothingly
The mist crept in from the sea.

The mist crept in from the sea,
White, impalpable, strange;
Pull of the wafture of wings,
Of eerie and eldritch things,
Of visions and vanishings
Ever in shift and change;
Silently, hauntingly,
The mist crept in from the sea.

The mist crept in from the sea,
And bode for a space, and then
It heard the imperious call
Of the deep, transcending all,
And it knew itself as the thrall
Of the world-old master of men,
So, still as the dreams that flee,
The mist crept back to the sea.

DIRGE FOR A SAILOR

Beyond the bourns of time and sleep,
Beyond the sway of tides,
A voyager o'er death's darksome deep,
His ship at anchor rides.

He who from boyhood never knew
A garden save the foam,
Whose only rooftree was the blue,
At last has found a home.

And what more fit than that the wave
He loved through life to stem
Should sing above his green sea grave
This sailor's requiem!

BAG-PIPES AT SEA

Above the shouting of the gale,
The whipping sheet, the dashing spray,
I heard, with notes of joy and wail,
A piper play.

Along the dipping deck he trod,

The dusk about his shadowy form;
He seemed like some strange ancient god
Of song and storm.

He gave his dim-seen pipes a skirl
And war went down the darkling air;
Then came a sudden subtle swirl,
And love was there.

What were the winds that flailed and flayed
The sea to him, the night obscure?
In dreams he strayed some brackened glade,
Some heathery moor.

And if he saw the slanting spars,
And if he watched the shifting track,
He marked, too, the eternal stars
Shine through the wrack.

And so amid the deep sea din,
And so amid the wastes of foam,
Afar his heart was happy in
His highland home!

THE WIND AND THE SEA

Never the long wind dieth,
Never, never,
But sigheth, crieth,
In its old endeavor,
Where the shifting sand and shingle
Meet and mingle,
And the lifting land and the surge of the waters sever!

Never the long wind faileth.
Never, never,
But still availeth
In its old endeavor;
Mortals, the changeful-hearted,
May be parted,
But the wind and the sea are wedded forever and ever!

THE TIDES

Through rush and reed
The long, strong tides recede,
Jostle and surge,
And toss and urge,
And foam and merge,
Where lily roots shine bright like bronzen brede.

"Haste! haste!"
That is their cry;
Back to the mother waste
They fleet, they fly,
Again to be embraced—
Again to be a part
Of that great heart!

As set the tides, so we,
After the stress and roar
Along life's shore,
Shall one day set toward the eternal sea!

A SEA ROVER

The breakers dash, the breakers boom,
Upon the beaches ceaselessly;
Beyond the line of flying spume
Stretch weltering wastes of sea.

There gray gulls hold their loud carouse,
The four great winds rejoice or mourn,
There go deep barques, with plunging prows,
On far adventures borne.

That one, with streaming pennon, seeks
The golden gates that guard the morn,
That one the perilous island peaks
Beyond the stormy Horn.

My fancy sails with each and all,
Unleashed, untrammled, unconfined;
There is no bond, there is no thrall,
Can chain the roving mind!

THE MIST BARQUE

Over the wave-rim faint and far
(Spectral sail and ghostly spar)
Through the mist-banks a vessel glides
Biding the ridge of the tossing tides.

Is it Van der Deeken again,
Scourge of the sea, with his evil men,
Come to wreak some murky spell
Out of the yawn of the gulfs of Hell?

Thus it seems that the craft might be,
With its shifting shroud of mystery,

Forth from the unknown weirdly cast,
Into the unknown fading fast.

Now no sign of it near or far,
Spectral sail or ghostly spar!
Yet shall I dream of it shudderingly,
Vanished, eldritch ship of the sea,

Fearful lest some barque be borne
In wake of the wraith (ah, hearts that mourn!)
Through the power of its fatal spell
Into the yawn of the gulfs of Hell.

A SEA SHELL

You speak to me
Of the long plunge and welter of the sea;
Likewise you are
Oracular
Of its low melody.
You voice its laughing moods,
Its lyric interludes,
Its secrecies, its sorceries, its mysteries,
Its tragic histories.
Aye, all that it has breathed, may breathe, shall breathe,
You unto me bequeath;
Thus am I made the fair inheritor
Of that rare essence of true harmony
Which many a land-girt exile hungers for,—
The sea!

NIGHT SONG BY THE SEA

Wind and rain are at the pane,
Shrilling, drumming without cease;
And the breakers' loud refrain
Gives the shuddering heart no peace.
Lord of all the things that be,
Pity Thou the souls at sea!

Snugly roofed with warmth and glow,
And encompassed soft by sleep,
Little we land-dwellers know
Of the terrors of the deep.
Lord, in Thy sweet charity,
Pity Thou the souls at sea!

On the smiling face of morn
Sure are we to gaze again;
What of those poor waifs forlorn

Furrowing the untracked main?
Lord, in their dire need of Thee,
Pity Thou the souls at sea!

Although riven be the rail,
Snapped the shroud and rent the mast,
May they into harbor sail,
All their perils overpast!
Lord, in Thy compassion, be
Pilot to the souls at sea!

WILD GEESE

Along the ocean's shingly edge,
Athwart the turquoise sweep of sky,
The wild geese in a winged wedge
Go darkling by.

From far lagoons be-plumed with palm,
By cove and cape, by bluff and bay,
Through depths of storm, through vasts of calm,
They speed their way.

The pharos flashes on their flight;
They do not heed its beckoning beam;
The great North, stretching weird and white,
Lures like a dream;

Lures, and they answer to the call;
Charms, and they yield them to the spell,
Moved ever by a subtle thrall
Inscrutable.

Do you not feel it, comrade, too,
The inescapable delight,
The mounting rapture, that bids you
Take vernal flight?

A SEA CHANGE

Night-long I heard the poignant undertone,
The interminable sobbing of the sea;
And now that morn breaks dim and dolorously
I mark the riotous surges landward blown,
Tempestuous and towering, and hurled prone
Upon the stark sand reaches; and the glee
Of the mad wind, its maniac monody,
Mingles with ocean's dithyrambic moan.

Not so yestreen, when westward flamed the sun,

Flinging athwart the waves a lustrous path,
Tinging the sky with colors rich and strange!
The black night wrought this mystery of wrath,
This mood demonic (reason seems there none),
This weird and inexplicable sea change!

SAINT SEPULCHRE'S BESIDE THE SEA

The new moon marked the twilight hour,
A night-jar quavered eerily,
And swallows circled round the tower—
Saint Sepulchre's beside the sea.

The ivy clung, the ivy climbed,
The wilding rose twined tenderly,
And Time, the overlord, sublimed
Saint Sepulchre's beside the sea.

Below, the surge, the solemn surge,
Murmured and moaned unceasingly,
For all its golden past a dirge—
Saint Sepulchre's beside the sea.

And love and hate were here as one;
Life blent with death harmoniously;
'Twas beauty in oblivion—
Saint Sepulchre's beside the sea!

SEA LYRICS

I

We heard the breakers clash and boom;
We saw them plunge and writhe and rise,
And toss great flakes of ashen spume
High toward the ashen skies.

Out of the welter of the east
One gaunt barque like a spectre bore;
The mad wind trumpeted, then ceased,
Then trumpeted once more.

A mist crept landward, the spent wraith
Of tempests raging far a-lee;
Then day died like an outworn faith,
And night fell on the sea.

II

O'erhead, the iridescence of the stars,
Ray blending softly with refulgent ray;
Below, above the harbor's hidden bars,
The crumbling iridescence of the spray.

Before, a beacon flashing level lines,
Seemingly poised upon the far sea-verge;
Behind, the night wind in the oaks and pines,
Crooning in answer to the crooning surge.

DAWN, THE HARVESTER

The purple sky has blanched to blue
With freaks and streaks of rose and fawn,
While on the rolling meads of sea
Gleam the gold footsteps of the Dawn.

What harvest, think you, will he find
Whither he sets his feet to roam?
Upon that boundless beryl plain
Only the lilies of the foam!

THE LILAC SEA

A cool wind took me by the hand
And led me on beguilingly,
Until before me, broad and bland,
Shimmered the lilac sea.

Great gulls, with mauve upon their wings,
And cries that lingered hauntingly,
Hovered, with graceful flutterings,
Above the lilac sea.

The curving shore-line had the gleam
Of amethyst; it seemed to me
The ships were all like ships of dream
Upon the lilac sea.

And naught was real, or near or far,
And yet I have the memory
Of twilight, and the vesper star,
Hung o'er the lilac sea.

A SAILOR AMID THE HILLS

What does he hear in dreams? The surging wind,
Its long-drawn cadence, its wild harmony,
A mighty harp of infinite strings designed,
Whose sound to him seems sweet immeasurably?

Nay, nay, but through the spaces of his mind,
Plangent or pleading, loud or low-defined,
The ever-haunting murmur of the sea!

SUMMER BY THE SEA

This is a song of summer by the sea,
Of surge-profundos chanted o'er and o'er;
Of ancient wrath and immemorial glee,
And of the ships that sailed and come no more.

This is a song of summer by the sea,
Of half-forgotten runes made long ago,
Of moon-wrought marvel and of mystery,
Of glamor—of the glow and after-glow.

This is a song of summer by the sea,
Of subtleties of change, of strange unrest;
Of dreams unfathomable that form and flee
Like drifts of mist above the ocean's breast.

DUSK AT SEA

Dusk, like a moth of violet wing, descends
Upon the beryl bosom of the sea,
And in the sky's serene immensity,
Where the impalpable rose of sunset blends
With pearl and purple, shine the sailor's friends,
God's blessed beacons twinkling timorously,
Then brighter, each in its divine degree,
To where the enrapt range of vision ends.

When dusk droops dark o'er life's uncertain seas,
Closing our day, deep-shadowing the sun,
And we go forth across death's pathless foam,
May we have stars more stedfast e'en than these,—
Burning above, for us to gaze upon,
Both light and guide on the long journey home.

THE SPEECH OF THE SEA

All yesterday the sea was sapphire fair,
And the waves told, with little rippling glees,
Of ships that sailed, and then returned to bear
Their golden argosies.

But ah, to-day the sea is ashen gray,
And ceaselessly has sobbed unto the shore
Of those ill-fated barques that sailed away
And came again no more!

NIGHT BY THE SEA

I woke in the black watches of the night
And heard the low intoning of the main,
A muffled heart-beat, an unceasing strain
Of music keyed to dolor and delight.
Now sorrow seemed ascendent, now the height
Of rapture beat in the sublime refrain,
Until the whole world's happiness and pain
Had echoed utterance while the dark took flight.

Then in the sound of that reiterant surge
I marked my own life's flux of bliss and woe—
Grief's long drawn sigh and joy's exultant call;
Till borne by dreams beyond the vast sea verge
I touched those shores the blest immortals know
Where youth and love have triumph over all.

AUTUMN BY THE SEA

Still on the sand and shingle gleams the sun;
Still an unclouded heaven arches o'er;
And still the languid billows roll and run
Down all the lengths of shore.

Still there are hints of summer in the air,
A sense of restfulness, of rapt repose;
And from remote sea gardens, lush and fair,
Rich attars like the rose.

Still a soft haze of delicate hyacinth
Broods o'er the sky-line, floating faint and far;
Still on the edge of night's vast labyrinth
Shines the clear vesper-star.

Soon, all too soon, the spindrift and the spume,
The legions of the surge that fleetly form;
The gray, illimitable wastes of gloom—
The thunderous caves of storm!

MIST AT SEA

The sea was mist-enwreathed at morn,
A void unspeakably forlorn;
Yet from the seeming barren gloom
Beauty, the dream of the world, was born.

A sudden wafture of wind breath,
And lo, sun glories none gainsaith!

Thus shall the wings of the soul emerge
White from the chrysalis of death.

A SEA SCENE

From rim to shimmering rim the sea
Is burnished like chalcedony.

The waves that set their lips to land
Scarce make a murmur on the sand.

The ships appear to poise between
Two voids of opalescent sheen.

Aye, here eternal calm seems set
In bland beatitude, and yet

A single potent hour, aye, less,
Can change this placid loveliness,

And cause, where life smiles fair and fain,
The raging demon death to reign!

MOONRISE BY THE SEA

Over the sea-rim peered the pallid moon
Out of a woven shroud
Of twilight purple, while their mighty tune
The breakers thundered loud.

No comrade star, only the mystery
Of that pale orb whose fire
Through immemorial nights has seemed to be
Fulfilled of dim desire.

And while its wan light drenched the foam-hid coasts,
To the low south wind's sigh
Methought the sad innumerable hosts
Of lovers dead went by;

And I was whelmed with sadness, with the sense
Of the immutable pathos of the years,
And how the sum of all love's opulence
Must be obscured by tears!

A SEA SONG

Dolphins under and sea-gulls over
The surge and shift of the dipping tide,
And you, my rover, my blithe sea-rover,

Sailing the path of the undenied.

In dreams I follow you, O my rover,
Wide, for the ways of the sea are wide;
Come back, come back when the voyage is over,—
Back to the heart of the long denied!

A SYMPHONY OF THE SEA

(GLOZE ROYAL)

..The surges sing in ceaseless monotone
The songs and sagas of the long-ago;
Many and mournful are the memories blown
Across the tireless tides that ebb and flow..

Lo, he who walks beside the wide sea-shore,
And sees the waves unbreasted by the oar,
And lets his thoughts repose on days long flown,
Will slowly o'er his dreamy vision feel
A sweetly lingering sadness softly steal,
And he will pause and listen to the moan
The iterant billows make upon the sand;
And all will seem to him a slumber-land,
Where, through the long night-watches dim and lone,
..The surges sing in ceaseless monotone!..

And in his ear the glorious myths of yore
With all the rhythmic burdens that they bore,
Will be retold, replete with joy and woe;—
Ulysses' voyage will ring with epic peal,
And the strange tale of Argo's wandering keel;
Of high-banked Tyrian galleys will he know,
Of Roman triremes, and of many a band
The Vikings led from their far norland strand;—
Stories of strife and love in shine and snow,
..The songs and sagas of the long-ago..

And there will rise within him, more and more,
The strong desire to learn the utmost lore
The great sea holds, that unto none is shown;
And he will cry and bid the deep unseal
Its sacred secrets, and to him reveal
What stern power rules it from what unseen throne.
But no vast shape will show a regnant hand,
Unless, perchance, wan Sorrow by him stand;
From Sorrow's pale, across the seas unsown,
..Many and mournful are the memories blown..

O thou that hast, from decades gone before,

Of bitter and of sweet the fullest store,
Immeasurable sea,—in gloom and glow
Our joy, our terror and our love,—we kneel
At thy dark altar with a vain appeal;
Within thy mighty bosom, far below,
Lie hid the mysteries of Him who planned
The circling spheres that wheel at His command;—
Ah, Sea of Life, to one sure port we go
Across the tireless tides that ebb and flow!