

Rudyard Kipling

The Seven Seas



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Kipling Rudyard

The Seven Seas

DEDICATION TO THE CITY OF BOMBAY

The Cities are full of pride,
Challenging each to each —
This from her mountain-side,
That from her burthened beach.

They count their ships full tale —
Their corn and oil and wine,
Derrick and loom and bale,
And rampart's gun-flecked line;
City by city they hail:
"Hast aught to match with mine?"

And the men that breed from them
They traffic up and down,
But cling to their cities' hem
As a child to the mother's gown.

When they talk with the stranger bands,

Dazed and newly alone;
When they walk in the stranger lands,
By roaring streets unknown;
Blessing her where she stands
For strength above their own.

(On high to hold her fame
That stands all fame beyond,
By oath to back the same,
Most faithful-foolish-fond;
Making her mere-breathed name
Their bond upon their bond.)

So thank I God my birth
Fell not in isles aside —
Waste headlands of the earth,
Or warring tribes untried —
But that she lent me worth
And gave me right to pride.

Surely in toil or fray
Under an alien sky,
Comfort it is to say:
"Of no mean city am I."

(Neither by service nor fee
Come I to mine estate —
Mother of Cities to me,
For I was born in her gate,

Between the palms and the sea,
Where the world-end steamers wait.)

Now for this debt I owe,
And for her far-borne cheer
Must I make haste and go
With tribute to her pier.

And she shall touch and remit
After the use of kings
(Orderly, ancient, fit)
My deep-sea plunderings,
And purchase in all lands.
And this we do for a sign
Her power is over mine,
And mine I hold at her hands.

A SONG OF THE ENGLISH

Fair is our lot – O goodly is our heritage!
(Humble ye, my people, and be fearful in your mirth!)
For the Lord our God Most High
He hath made the deep as dry,
He hath smote for us a pathway to the ends of all the Earth!

Yea, though we sinned – and our rulers went from
righteousness —
Deep in all dishonour though we stained our garments' hem.
Oh be ye not dismayed,
Though we stumbled and we strayed,
We were led by evil counsellors – the Lord shall deal with
them.

Hold ye the Faith – the Faith our Fathers sealèd us;
Whoring not with visions – overwise and overstale.
Except ye pay the Lord
Single heart and single sword,
Of your children in their bondage shall He ask them treble-
tale.

Keep ye the Law – be swift in all obedience.
Clear the land of evil, drive the road and bridge the ford.
Make ye sure to each his own

That he reap what he hath sown;
By the peace among Our peoples let men know we serve the
Lord.

Hear now a song – a song of broken interludes —
A song of little cunning; of a singer nothing worth.
Through the naked words and mean
May ye see the truth between
As the singer knew and touched it in the ends of all the Earth!

The Coastwise Lights

Our brows are wreathed with spindrift and the weed is on our knees;

Our loins are battered 'neath us by the swinging, smoking seas.

From reef and rock and skerry – over headland, ness and voe

The Coastwise Lights of England watch the ships of England go!

Through the endless summer evenings, on the lineless, level floors;

Through the yelling Channel tempest when the syren hoots and roars —

By day the dipping house-flag and by night the rocket's trail

As the sheep that graze behind us so we know them where they hail.

We bridge across the dark, and bid the helmsman have a care,
The flash that wheeling inland wakes his sleeping wife to prayer;

From our vexed eyries, head to gale, we bind in burning chains

The lover from the sea-rim drawn – his love in English lanes.

We greet the clippers wing-and-wing that race the Southern
wool;

We warn the crawling cargo-tanks of Bremen, Leith and Hull;
To each and all our equal lamp at peril of the sea —
The white wall-sided warships or the whalers of Dundee!

Come up, come in from Eastward, from the guard-ports of
the Morn!

Beat up, beat in from Southerly, O gipsies of the Horn!
Swift shuttles of an Empire's loom that weave us main to
main,
The Coastwise Lights of England give you welcome back
again!

Go, get you gone up-Channel with the sea-crust on your
plates;

Go, get you into London with the burden of your freights!
Haste, for they talk of Empire there, and say, if any seek,
The Lights of England sent you and by silence shall ye speak.

The Song of the Dead

Hear now the Song of the Dead – in the North by the torn
berg-edges —

They that look still to the Pole, asleep by their hide-stripped
sledges.

Song of the Dead in the South – in the sun by their skeleton
horses,

Where the warrigal whimpers and bays through the dust of
the sere river-courses.

Song of the Dead in the East – in the heat-rotted jungle
hollows,

Where the dog-ape barks in the kloof – in the brake of the
buffalo-wallows.

Song of the Dead in the West – in the Barrens, the snow that
betrayed them,

Where the wolverine tumbles their packs from the camp and
the grave-mound they made them;

Hear now the Song of the Dead!

I

We were dreamers, dreaming greatly, in the man-stifled

town;

We yearned beyond the skyline where the strange roads go down.

Came the Whisper, came the Vision, came the Power with the Need.

Till the Soul that is not man's soul was lent us to lead.

As the deer breaks – as the steer breaks – from the herd where they graze,

In the faith of little children we went on our ways.

Then the wood failed – then the food failed – then the last water dried —

In the faith of little children we lay down and died.

On the sand-drift – on the veldt-side – in the fern-scrub we lay,

That our sons might follow after by the bones on the way.

Follow after – follow after! We have watered the root,

And the bud has come to blossom that ripens for fruit!

Follow after – we are waiting by the trails that we lost

For the sound of many footsteps, for the tread of a host.

Follow after – follow after – for the harvest is sown:

By the bones about the wayside ye shall come to your own!

When Drake went down to the Horn

And England was crowned thereby,

'Twixt seas unsailed and shores unhailed

Our Lodge – our Lodge was born

(And England was crowned thereby).

Which never shall close again

*By day nor yet by night,
While man shall take his life to stake
At risk of shoal or main
(By day nor yet by night),*

*But standeth even so
As now we witness here,
While men depart, of joyful heart,
Adventure for to know.
(As now bear witness here).*

II

We have fed our sea for a thousand years
And she calls us, still unfed,
Though there's never a wave of all her waves
But marks our English dead:
We have strawed our best to the weed's unrest
To the shark and the sheering gull.
If blood be the price of admiralty,
Lord God, we ha' paid in full!

There's never a flood goes shoreward now
But lifts a keel we manned;
There's never an ebb goes seaward now
But drops our dead on the sand —
But slinks our dead on the sands forlore,

From The Ducies to the Swin.
If blood be the price of admiralty,
If blood be the price of admiralty,
Lord God, we ha' paid it in!

We must feed our sea for a thousand years,
For that is our doom and pride,
As it was when they sailed with the *Golden Hind*
Or the wreck that struck last tide —
Or the wreck that lies on the spouting reef
Where the ghastly blue-lights flare.
If blood be the price of admiralty,
If blood be the price of admiralty,
If blood be the price of admiralty,
Lord God, we ha' bought it fair!

The Deep-sea Cables

The wrecks dissolve above us; their dust drops down from afar —

Down to the dark, to the utter dark, where the blind white sea-snakes are.

There is no sound, no echo of sound, in the deserts of the deep,

Or the great gray level plains of ooze where the shell-burred cables creep.

Here in the womb of the world – here on the tie-ribs of earth
Words, and the words of men, flicker and flutter and beat —
Warning, sorrow and gain, salutation and mirth —

For a Power troubles the Still that has neither voice nor feet.

They have wakened the timeless Things; they have killed their father Time;

Joining hands in the gloom, a league from the last of the sun.
Hush! Men talk to-day o'er the waste of the ultimate slime,
And a new Word runs between: whispering, "Let us be one!"

The Song of the Sons

One from the ends of the earth – gifts at an open door —
Treason has much, but we, Mother, thy sons have more!
From the whine of a dying man, from the snarl of a wolf-
pack freed,
Turn, for the world is thine. Mother, be proud of thy seed!
Count, are we feeble or few? Hear, is our speech so rude?
Look, are we poor in the land? Judge, are we men of The
Blood?

Those that have stayed at thy knees, Mother, go call them in
—

We that were bred overseas wait and would speak with our
kin.

Not in the dark do we fight – haggle and flout and gibe;
Selling our love for a price, loaning our hearts for a bribe.
Gifts have we only to-day – Love without promise or fee —
Hear, for thy children speak, from the uttermost parts of the
sea:

The Song of the Cities

Bombay

Royal and Dower-royal, I the Queen
Fronting thy richest sea with richer hands —
A thousand mills roar through me where I glean
All races from all lands.

Calcutta

Me the Sea-captain loved, the River built,
Wealth sought and Kings adventured life to hold.
Hail, England! I am Asia – Power on silt,
Death in my hands, but Gold!

Madras

Clive kissed me on the mouth and eyes and brow,
Wonderful kisses, so that I became
Crowned above Queens – a withered beldame now,

Brooding on ancient fame.

Rangoon

Hail, Mother! Do they call me rich in trade?
Little care I, but hear the shorn priest drone,
And watch my silk-clad lovers, man by maid,
Laugh 'neath my Shwe Dagon.

Singapore

Hail, Mother! East and West must seek my aid
Ere the spent gear shall dare the ports afar.
The second doorway of the wide world's trade
Is mine to loose or bar.

Hong-Kong

Hail, Mother! Hold me fast; my Praya sleeps
Under innumerable keels to-day.
Yet guard (and landward) or to-morrow sweeps
Thy warships down the bay.

Halifax

Into the mist my guardian prowls put forth,
Behind the mist my virgin ramparts lie,
The Warden of the Honour of the North,
Sleepless and veiled am I!

Quebec and Montreal

Peace is our portion. Yet a whisper rose,
Foolish and causeless, half in jest, half hate.
Now wake we and remember mighty blows,
And, fearing no man, wait!

Victoria

From East to West the circling word has passed,
Till West is East beside our land-locked blue;
From East to West the tested chain holds fast,
The well-forged link rings true!

Capetown

Hail! Snatched and bartered oft from hand to hand,
I dream my dream, by rock and heath and pine,
Of Empire to the northward. Ay, one land
From Lion's Head to Line!

Melbourne

Greeting! Nor fear nor favour won us place,
Got between greed of gold and dread of drouth,
Loud-voiced and reckless as the wild tide-race
That whips our harbour-mouth!

Sydney

Greeting! My birth-stain have I turned to good;
Forcing strong wills perverse to steadfastness;
The first flush of the tropics in my blood,
And at my feet Success!

Brisbane

The northern stirp beneath the southern skies —
I build a nation for an Empire's need,
Suffer a little, and my land shall rise,
Queen over lands indeed!

Hobart

Man's love first found me; man's hate made me Hell;
For my babes' sake I cleansed those infamies.
Earnest for leave to live and labour well
God flung me peace and ease.

Auckland

Last, loneliest, loveliest, exquisite, apart —
On us, on us the unswerving season smiles,
Who wonder 'mid our fern why men depart
To seek the Happy Isles!

England's Answer

Truly ye come of The Blood; slower to bless than to ban;
Little used to lie down at the bidding of any man.
Flesh of the flesh that I bred, bone of the bone that I bare;
Stark as your sons shall be – stern as your fathers were.
Deeper than speech our love, stronger than life our tether,
But we do not fall on the neck nor kiss when we come together.

My arm is nothing weak, my strength is not gone by;
Sons, I have borne many sons but my dugs are not dry.
Look, I have made ye a place and opened wide the doors,
That ye may talk together, your Barons and Councillors —
Wards of the Outer March, Lords of the Lower Seas,
Ay, talk to your gray mother that bore you on her knees! —
That ye may talk together, brother to brother's face —
Thus for the good of your peoples – thus for the Pride of the Race.

Also, we will make promise. So long as The Blood endures,
I shall know that your good is mine: ye shall feel that my strength is yours:

In the day of Armageddon, at the last great fight of all,
That Our House stand together and the pillars do not fall.
Draw now the three-fold knot firm on the nine-fold bands,
And the Law that ye make shall be law after the rule of your lands.

This for the waxen Heath, and that for the Wattle-bloom,

This for the Maple-leaf, and that for the southern Broom.
The Law that ye make shall be law and I do not press my will,
Because ye are Sons of The Blood and call me Mother still.
Now must ye speak to your kinsmen and they must speak to
you,

After the use of the English, in straight-flung words and few.
Go to your work and be strong, halting not in your ways,
Baulking the end half-won for an instant dole of praise.
Stand to your work and be wise – certain of sword and pen,
Who are neither children nor Gods, but men in a world of
men!

THE FIRST CHANTEY

Mine was the woman to me, darkling I found her;
Haling her dumb from the camp, held her and bound her.
Hot rose her tribe on our track ere I had proved her;
Hearing her laugh in the gloom, greatly I loved her.

Swift through the forest we ran; none stood to guard us,
Few were my people and far; then the flood barred us —
Him we call Son of the Sea, sullen and swollen;
Panting we waited the death, stealer and stolen,

Yet ere they came to my lance laid for the slaughter,
Lightly she leaped to a log lapped in the water;
Holding on high and apart skins that arrayed her,
Called she the God of the Wind that he should aid her.

Life had the tree at that word, (Praise we the Giver!)
Otter-like left he the bank for the full river.
Far fell their axes behind, flashing and ringing,
Wonder was on me and fear, yet she was singing.

Low lay the land we had left. Now the blue bound us,
Even the Floor of the Gods level around us.
Whisper there was not, nor word, shadow nor showing,
Still the light stirred on the deep, glowing and growing.

Then did He leap to His place flaring from under,
He the Compeller, the Sun, bared to our wonder.
Nay, not a league from our eyes blinded with gazing,
Cleared He the womb of the world, huge and amazing!

This we beheld (and we live) – the Pit of the Burning,
Then the God spoke to the tree for our returning;
Back to the beach of our flight, fearless and slowly,
Back to our slayers he went: but we were holy.

Men that were hot in that hunt, women that followed,
Babes that were promised our bones, trembled and wallowed:
Over the necks of the tribe crouching and fawning —
Prophet and priestess we came back from the dawning!

THE LAST CHANTEY

"And there was no more sea."

Thus said The Lord in the Vault above the Cherubim,
Calling to the angels and the souls in their degree:

"Lo! Earth has passed away

On the smoke of Judgment Day.

That Our word may be established shall We gather up the
sea?"

Loud sang the souls of the jolly, jolly mariners:

"Plague upon the hurricane that made us furl and flee!

But the war is done between us,

In the deep the Lord hath seen us —

Our bones we'll leave the barracout', and God may sink the
sea!"

Then said the soul of Judas that betrayèd Him:

"Lord, hast Thou forgotten Thy covenant with me?

How once a year I go

To cool me on the floe,

And Ye take my day of mercy if Ye take away the sea!"

Then said the soul of the Angel of the Off-shore Wind:

(He that bits the thunder when the bull-mouthed breakers flee):

"I have watch and ward to keep
O'er Thy wonders on the deep,
And Ye take mine honour from me if Ye take away the sea!"

Loud sang the souls of the jolly, jolly mariners:

"Nay, but we were angry, and a hasty folk are we!
If we worked the ship together
Till she foundered in foul weather,
Are we babes that we should clamour for a vengeance on the sea?"

Then said the souls of the slaves that men threw overboard:
"Kennelled in the picaroon a weary band were we;
But Thy arm was strong to save,
And it touched us on the wave,
And we drowsed the long tides idle till Thy Trumpets tore
the sea."

Then cried the soul of the stout Apostle Paul to God:
"Once we frapped a ship, and she laboured woundily.
There were fourteen score of these,
And they blessed Thee on their knees,
When they learned Thy Grace and Glory under Malta by the
sea."

Loud sang the souls of the jolly, jolly mariners,
Plucking at their harps, and they plucked unhandily:

"Our thumbs are rough and tarred,
And the tune is something hard —
May we lift a Deep-sea Chantey such as seamen use at sea?"

Then said the souls of the gentlemen-adventurers —
Fettered wrist to bar all for red iniquity:

"Ho, we revel in our chains
O'er the sorrow that was Spain's;
Heave or sink it, leave or drink it, we were masters of the
sea!"

Up spake the soul of a gray Gothavn 'speckshioner —
(He that led the flinching in the fleets of fair Dundee):

"Ho, the ringer and right whale,
And the fish we struck for sale,
Will Ye whelm them all for wantonness that wallow in the
sea?"

Loud sang the souls of the jolly, jolly mariners,
Crying: "Under Heaven, here is neither lead nor lea!
Must we sing for evermore
On the windless, glassy floor?
Take back your golden fiddles and we'll beat to open sea!"

Then stooped the Lord, and He called the good sea up to Him,
And 'stablished his borders unto all eternity,
That such as have no pleasure
For to praise the Lord by measure,
They may enter into galleons and serve Him on the sea.

*Sun, wind, and cloud shall fail not from the face of it,
Stinging, ringing spindrift, nor the fulmar flying free;
And the ships shall go abroad
To the glory of the Lord
Who heard the silly sailor-folk and gave them back their sea!*

THE MERCHANTMEN

King Solomon drew merchantmen,
Because of his desire
For peacocks, apes, and ivory,
From Tarshish unto Tyre:
With cedars out of Lebanon
Which Hiram rafted down,
But we be only sailormen
That use in London town.

*Coastwise – cross-seas – round the world and back again —
Where the flaw shall head us or the full Trade suits —
Plain-sail – storm-sail – lay your board and tack again —
And that's the way we'll pay Paddy Doyle for his boots!*

We bring no store of ingots,
Of spice or precious stones,
But that we have we gathered
With sweat and aching bones:
In flame beneath the tropics,
In frost upon the floe,
And jeopardy of every wind
That does between them go.

And some we got by purchase,

And some we had by trade,
And some we found by courtesy
Of pike and carronade,
At midnight, 'mid-sea meetings,
For charity to keep,
And light the rolling homeward-bound
That rode a foot too deep.

By sport of bitter weather
We're walty, strained, and scarred
From the kentledge on the kelson
To the slings upon the yard.
Six oceans had their will of us
To carry all away —
Our galley 's in the Baltic,
And our boom 's in Mossel Bay!

We've floundered off the Texel,
Awash with sodden deals,
We've slipped from Valparaiso
With the Norther at our heels:
We've ratched beyond the Crossets
That tusk the Southern Pole,
And dipped our gunnels under
To the dread Agulhas roll.

Beyond all outer charting
We sailed where none have sailed,
And saw the land-lights burning

On islands none have hailed;
Our hair stood up for wonder,
But, when the night was done,
There danced the deep to windward
Blue-empty 'neath the sun!

Strange consorts rode beside us
And brought us evil luck;
The witch-fire climbed our channels,
And danced on vane and truck:
Till, through the red tornado,
That lashed us nigh to blind,
We saw The Dutchman plunging,
Full canvas, head to wind!

We've heard the Midnight Leadsman
That calls the black deep down —
Ay, thrice we've heard The Swimmer,
The Thing that may not drown.
On frozen bunt and gasket
The sleet-cloud drave her hosts,
When, manned by more than signed with us,
We passed the Isle o' Ghosts!

And north, amid the hummocks,
A biscuit-toss below,
We met the silent shallop
That frightened whalers know;
For, down a cruel ice-lane,

That opened as he sped,
We saw dead Henry Hudson
Steer, North by West, his dead.

So dealt God's waters with us
Beneath the roaring skies,
So walked His signs and marvels
All naked to our eyes:
But we were heading homeward
With trade to lose or make —
Good Lord, they slipped behind us
In the tailing of our wake!
Let go, let go the anchors;
Now shamed at heart are we
To bring so poor a cargo home
That had for gift the sea!

Let go the great bow-anchors —
Ah, fools were we and blind —
The worst we baled with utter toil,
The best we left behind!

*Coastwise – cross-seas – round the world and back again,
Whither the flaw shall fail us or the Trades drive down:
Plain-sail – storm-sail – lay your board and tack again —
And all to bring a cargo up to London Town!*

McANDREWS' HYMN

Lord, Thou hast made this world below the shadow of a dream,

An', taught by time, I tak' it so – exceptin' always Steam.
From coupler-flange to spindle-guide I see Thy Hand, O God

—

Predestination in the stride o' yon connectin'-rod.
John Calvin might ha' forged the same – enormous, certain,
slow —

Ay, wrought it in the furnace-flame —*my* "Institutio."
I cannot get my sleep to-night; old bones are hard to please;
I'll stand the middle watch up here – alone wi' God an' these
My engines, after ninety days o' race an' rack an' strain
Through all the seas of all Thy world, slam-bangin' home
again.

Slam-bang too much – they knock a wee – the crosshead-gibs are loose;

But thirty thousand mile o' sea has gied them fair excuse...
Fine, clear an' dark – a full-draught breeze, wi' Ushant out
o' sight,

An' Ferguson relievin' Hay. Old girl, ye'll walk to-night!
His wife's at Plymouth... Seventy – One – Two – Three since
he began —

Three turns for Mistress Ferguson ... an' who's to blame the
man?

There's none at any port for me, by drivin' fast or slow,
Since Elsie Campbell went to Thee, Lord, thirty years ago.
(The year the *Sarah Sands* was burned. Oh roads we used to tread,

Fra' Maryhill to Pollokshaws – fra' Govan to Parkhead!)
Not but they're ceevil on the Board. Ye'll hear Sir Kenneth say:

"Good mornn, McAndrews! Back again? An' how's your bilge to-day?"

Miscallin' technicalities but handin' me my chair
To drink Madeira wi' three Earls – the auld Fleet Engineer,
That started as a boiler-whelp – when steam and he were low.
I mind the time we used to serve a broken pipe wi' tow.
Ten pound was all the pressure then – Eh! Eh! – a man wad drive;

An' here, our workin' gauges give one hunder' fifty-five!
We're creepin' on wi' each new rig – less weight an' larger power:

There'll be the loco-boiler next an' thirty knots an hour!
Thirty an' more. What I ha' seen since ocean-steam began
Leaves me no doot for the machine: but what about the man?
The man that counts, wi' all his runs, one million mile o' sea:
Four time the span from earth to moon... How far, O Lord,
from Thee?

That wast beside him night an' day. Ye mind my first typhoon?

It scoughed the skipper on his way to jock wi' the saloon.
Three feet were on the stokehold floor – just slappin' to an' fro —

An' cast me on a furnace-door. I have the marks to show.
Marks! I ha' marks o' more than burns – deep in my soul an'
black,

An' times like this, when things go smooth, my wickudness
comes back.

The sins o' four and forty years, all up an' down the seas,
Clack an' repeat like valves half-fed... Forgie's our
trespasses.

Nights when I'd come on deck to mark, wi' envy in my gaze,
The couples kittlin' in the dark between the funnel stays;
Years when I raked the ports wi' pride to fill my cup o' wrong
—

Judge not, O Lord, my steps aside at Gay Street in Hong-
Kong!

Blot out the wastrel hours of mine in sin when I abode —
Jane Harrigan's an' Number Nine, The Reddick an' Grant
Road!

An' waur than all – my crownin' sin – rank blasphemy an'
wild.

I was not four and twenty then – Ye wadna' judge a child?
I'd seen the Tropics first that run – new fruit, new smells, new
air —

How could I tell – blind-fou wi' sun – the Deil was lurkin'
there?

By day like playhouse-scenes the shore slid past our sleepy
eyes;

By night those soft, lasceevious stars leered from those velvet
skies,

In port (we used no cargo-steam) I'd daunder down the streets

—
An ijjit grinnin' in a dream – for shells an' parrakeets,
An' walkin'-sticks o' carved bamboo an' blowfish stuffed an'
dried —

Fillin' my bunk wi' rubbishry the Chief put overside.
Till, off Sumbawa Head, Ye mind, I heard a land-breeze ca'
Milk-warm wi' breath o' spice an' bloom: "McAndrews,
come awa'!"

Firm, clear an' low – no haste, no hate – the ghostly whisper
went,

Just statin' eevidential facts beyon' all argument:
"Your mither's God's a graspin' deil, the shadow o' yoursel',
Got out o' books by meenisters clean daft on Heaven an' Hell.
They mak' him in the Broomielaw, o' Glasgie cold an' dirt,
A jealous, pridefu' fetich, lad, that's only strong to hurt,
Ye'll not go back to Him again an' kiss His red-hot rod,
But come wi' Us" (Now, who were *They*?) "an' know the
Leevin' God,

That does not kipper souls for sport or break a life in jest,
But swells the ripenin' cocoanuts an' ripens the woman's
breast."

An' there it stopped: cut off: no more; that quiet, certain voice

—

For me, six months o' twenty-four, to leave or take at choice.
'Twas on me like a thunderclap – it racked me through an'
through —

Temptation past the show o' speech, unnamable an' new —
The Sin against the Holy Ghost?.. An' under all, our screw.
That storm blew by but left behind her anchor-shiftin' swell,

Thou knowest all my heart an' mind, Thou knowest, Lord, I
fell.

Third on the *Mary Gloster* then, and first that night in Hell!
Yet was Thy hand beneath my head: about my feet Thy care

Fra' Deli clear to Torres Strait, the trial o' despair,
But when we touched the Barrier Reef Thy answer to my
prayer!

We dared na run that sea by night but lay an' held our fire,
An' I was drowzin' on the hatch – sick – sick wi' doubt an' tire:
"*Better the sight of eyes that see than wanderin' o' desire!*"

Ye mind that word? Clear as our gongs – again, an' once
again,

When rippin' down through coral-trash ran out our moorin'-
chain;

An' by Thy Grace I had the Light to see my duty plain.
Light on the engine-room – no more – clear as our carbons
burn.

I've lost it since a thousand times, but never past return.

Obsairve! Per annum we'll have here two thousand souls
aboard —

Think not I dare to justify myself before the Lord,
But – average fifteen hunder' souls safe-borne fra' port to port

I *am* o' service to my kind. Ye wadna' blame the thought?
Maybe they steam from grace to wrath – to sin by folly led, —
It isna mine to judge their path – their lives are on my head.
Mine at the last – when all is done it all comes back to me,

The fault that leaves six thousand ton a log upon the sea.
We'll tak' one stretch – three weeks an' odd by any road ye
steer —

Fra' Cape Town east to Wellington – ye need an engineer.
Fail there – ye've time to weld your shaft – ay, eat it, ere ye're
spoke,
Or make Kerguelen under sail – three jiggers burned wi'
smoke!

An' home again, the Rio run: it's no child's play to go
Steamin' to bell for fourteen days o' snow an' floe an' blow —
The bergs like kelpies overside that girn an' turn an' shift
Whaur, grindin' like the Mills o' God, goes by the big South
drift.

(Hail, snow an' ice that praise the Lord: I've met them at their
work,

An' wished we had anither route or they anither kirk.)
Yon's strain, hard strain, o' head an' hand, for though Thy
Power brings
All skill to naught, Ye'll understand a man must think o'
things.

Then, at the last, we'll get to port an' hoist their baggage clear
—

The passengers, wi' gloves an' canes – an' this is what I'll hear:
"Well, thank ye for a pleasant voyage. The tender's comin'
now."

While I go testin' follower-bolts an' watch the skipper bow.
They've words for everyone but me – shake hands wi' half
the crew,

Except the dour Scots engineer, the man they never knew.

An' yet I like the wark for all we've dam' few pickin's here —
No pension, an' the most we earn's four hunder' pound a year.
Better myself abroad? Maybe. *I'd* sooner starve than sail
Wi' such as call a snifter-rod *ross*... French for nightingale.
Commeesion on my stores? Some do; but I can not afford
To lie like stewards wi' patty-pans. I'm older than the Board.
A bonus on the coal I save? Ou ay, the Scots are close,
But when I grudge the strength Ye gave I'll grudge their food
to *those*.

(There's bricks that I might recommend – an' clink the fire-
bars cruel.

No! Welsh – Wangarti at the worst – an' damn all patent fuel!)
Inventions? Ye must stay in port to mak' a patent pay.
My Deferential Valve-Gear taught me how that business lay,
I blame no chaps wi' clearer head for aught they make or sell.
I found that I could not invent an' look to these – as well.
So, wrestled wi' Apollyon – Nah! – fretted like a bairn —
But burned the workin'-plans last run wi' all I hoped to earn.
Ye know how hard an Idol dies, an' what that meant to me —
E'en tak' it for a sacrifice acceptable to Thee...

*Below there! Oiler! What's your wark? Ye find her runnin'
hard?*

Ye needn't swill the cap wi' oil – this isn't the Cunard.

Ye thought? Ye are not paid to think. Go, sweat that off again!

Tck! Tck! It's deeficult to sweer nor tak' The Name in vain!

Men, ay an' women, call me stern. Wi' these to oversee

Ye'll note I've little time to burn on social repatee.

The bairns see what their elders miss; they'll hunt me to an'
fro,

Till for the sake of – well, a kiss – I tak' 'em down below.
That minds me of our Viscount loon – Sir Kenneth's kin –
the chap

Wi' russia leather tennis-shoon an' spar-decked yachtin'-cap.
I showed him round last week, o'er all – an' at the last says he:
"Mister McAndrews, don't you think steam spoils romance
at sea?"

Damned ijjit! I'd been doon that morn to see what ailed the
throws,

Manholin', on my back – the cranks three inches from my
nose.

Romance! Those first-class passengers they like it very well,
Printed an' bound in little books; but why don't poets tell?
I'm sick of all their quirks an' turns – the loves an' doves they
dream —

Lord, send a man like Robbie Burns to sing the Song o'
Steam!

To match wi' Scotia's noblest speech yon orchestra sublime
Whaurto – uplifted like the Just – the tail-rods mark the time.
The crank-throws give the double-bass; the feed-pump sobs
an' heaves:

An' now the main eccentrics start their quarrel on the sheaves.
Her time, her own appointed time, the rocking link-head
bides,

Till – hear that note? – the rod's return whings glimmerin'
through the guides.

They're all awa'! True beat, full power, the clangin' chorus
goes

Clear to the tunnel where they sit, my purrin' dynamoes.

Interdependence absolute, foreseen, ordained, decreed,
To work, Ye'll note, at any tilt an' every rate o' speed.
Fra' skylight-lift to furnace-bars, backed, bolted, braced an'
stayed,
An' singin' like the Mornin' Stars for joy that they are made;
While, out o' touch o' vanity, the sweatin' thrust-block says:
"Not unto us the praise, or man – not unto us the praise!"
Now, a' together, hear them lift their lesson – theirs an' mine:
"Law, Orrder, Duty an' Restraint, Obedience, Discipline!"
Mill, forge an' try-pit taught them that when roarin' they
arose,
An' whiles I wonder if a soul was gied them wi' the blows.
Oh for a man to weld it then, in one trip-hammer strain,
Till even first-class passengers could tell the meanin' plain!
But no one cares except mysel' that serve an' understand
My seven thousand horse-power here. Eh, Lord! They're
grand – they're grand!
Uplift am I? When first in store the new-made beasties stood,
Were Ye cast down that breathed the Word declarin' all things
good?
Not so! O' that warld-liftin' joy no after-fall could vex,
Ye've left a glimmer still to cheer the Man – the Arrtifex!
That holds, in spite o' knock and scale, o' friction, waste an'
slip,
An' by that light – now, mark my word – we'll build the
Perfect Ship.
I'll never last to judge her lines or take her curve – not I.
But I ha' lived an' I ha' worked. All thanks to Thee, Most
High!

An' I ha' done what I ha' done – judge Thou if ill or well —
Always Thy Grace preventin' me...

Losh! Yon's the "Stand by" bell.

Pilot so soon? His flare it is. The mornin'-watch is set.

Well, God be thanked, as I was sayin', I'm no Pelagian yet.

Now I'll tak' on...

'Morrn, Ferguson. Man, have ye ever thought

*What your good leddy costs in coal?.. I'll burn 'em down to
port.*

THE MIRACLES

I sent a message to my dear —
A thousand leagues and more to her —
The dumb sea-levels thrilled to hear,
And Lost Atlantis bore to her.

Behind my message hard I came,
And nigh had found a grave for me;
But that I launched of steel and flame
Did war against the wave for me.

Uprose the deep, by gale on gale,
To bid me change my mind again —
He broke his teeth along my rail,
And, roaring, swung behind again.

I stayed the sun at noon to tell
My way across the waste of it;
I read the storm before it fell
And made the better haste of it.

Afar, I hailed the land at night —
The towers I built had heard of me —
And, ere my rocket reached its height,
Had flashed my Love the word of me.

Earth gave her chosen men of strength
(They lived and strove and died for me)
To drive my road a nation's length,
And toss the miles aside for me.

I snatched their toil to serve my needs —
Too slow their fleetest flew for me —
I tired twenty smoking steeds,
And bade them bait a new for me.

I sent the lightnings forth to see
Where hour by hour she waited me.
Among ten million one was she,
And surely all men hated me!

Dawn ran to meet us at my goal —
Ah, day no tongue shall tell again! —
And little folk of little soul
Rose up to buy and sell again!

THE NATIVE-BORN

We've drunk to the Queen — God bless her! —
We've drunk to our mothers' land;
We've drunk to our English brother
(But he does not understand);
We've drunk to the wide creation,
And the Cross swings low to the morn,
Last toast, and of obligation,
A health to the Native-born!

They change their skies above them,
But not their hearts that roam!
We learned from our wistful mothers
To call old England "home";
We read of the English sky-lark,
Of the spring in the English lanes,
But we screamed with the painted lories
As we rode on the dusty plains!

They passed with their old-world legends —
Their tales of wrong and dearth —
Our fathers held by purchase,
But we by the right of birth;
Our heart's where they rocked our cradle,
Our love where we spent our toil,

And our faith and our hope and our honour
We pledge to our native soil!

I charge you charge your glasses —
I charge you drink with me
To the men of the Four New Nations,
And the Islands of the Sea —
To the last least lump of coral
That none may stand outside,
And our own good pride shall teach us
To praise our comrade's pride.

To the hush of the breathless morning
On the thin, tin, crackling roofs,
To the haze of the burned back-ranges
And the dust of the shoeless hoofs —
To the risk of a death by drowning,
To the risk of a death by drouth —
To the men of a million acres,
To the Sons of the Golden South.

To the Sons of the Golden South, (Stand up!)
And the life we live and know,
Let a fellow sing o' the little things he cares about,
If a fellow fights for the little things he cares about
With the weight of a single blow!

To the smoke of a hundred coasters,
To the sheep on a thousand hills,

To the sun that never blisters,
To the rain that never chills —
To the land of the waiting springtime,
To our five-meal, meat-fed men,
To the tall deep-bosomed women,
And the children nine and ten!

And the children nine and ten, (Stand up!)
And the life we live and know,
Let a fellow sing o' the little things he cares about,
If a fellow fights for the little things he cares about

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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