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John Marr and Other Sailors: An Online Electronic 'Facsimile' Text of the First Edition (1888)

Herman Melville

Paul Royster (editor & depositor)
University of Nebraska-Lincoln, proyster@unl.edu

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JOHN MARR

AND OTHER SAILORS

WITH SOME SEA-PIECES

NEW-YORK
THE DE VINNE PRESS
1888

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INSCRIPTION EPISTOLARY

TO

W. C. R.

HEALTH AND CONTENT :

Hilary, my companionable acquaintance, during an afternoon stroll under the trees along the higher bluffs of our Riverside Park last June, entertained me with one of those clever little theories, for the originating and formulating whereof he has a singular aptitude. He had but recently generalized it—so, at least, I inferred—from certain subtler particulars which, in the instances of sundry individuals, he flattered himself his perspicacity had enabled him to discern.

Let me communicate to you this theory; not that I imagine you will hail it as a rare intellectual acquisition; hardly that, but because I am much mistaken if it do not attract your personal interest, however little it may otherwise, and with other people, win consideration or regard.

Briefly put, it is this. Letting alone less familiar nationalities, an American born in England, or an Englishman born in America, each in his natural make-up retains through life, and will some way evince, an intangible something imbibed with his mother's milk from the soil of his nativity.

But for a signal illustration hereof, whom, think you, he cites ? Well, look into any mirror at hand and you will see the gentleman. Yes, Hilary thinks he perceives in the nautical novels of W. C. R. an occasional flavor as if the honest mid-sea brine, their main constituent, were impregnated with a dash of the New World's alluvium—such, say, as is discharged by our Father of Waters into the Gulf of Mexico. "Natural enough," he observes ; "for, though a countryman of the Queen,—his parentage, home, and

allegiance all Engish,—this writer, I am credibly informed, is in his birthplace a New-Worlder ; ay, first looked out upon life from a window here of our island of Manhattan, nor very far from the site of my place in Broadway, by Jove !"

Now, Hilary is that rare bird, a man at once genial and acute. Genial, I mean, without sharing much in mere gregariousness, which, with some, passes for a sort of geniality; and acute, though lacking more or less in cautionary self-skepticism. No wonder then that, however pleasing and instructive be Hilary's companionship, and much as I value the man, yet as touching more than one of his shrewder speculations I have been reluctantly led to distrust a little that penetrative perspicacity of his, a quality immoderately developed in him, and perhaps (who knows ?), developed by his business ; for he is an optician, daily having to do with the microscope, telescope, and other inventions for sharpening and extending our natural sight, thus enabling us mortals (as I once heard an eccentric put it) liberally to enlarge the field of our original and essential ignorance.

In a word, my excellent friend's private little theory, while, like many a big and bruited one, not without a fancifully plausible aspect commending it to the easy of belief, is yet, in my humble judgment,—though I would not hint as much to him for the world,—made up in no small part of one element inadmissible in sound philosophy — namely, moonshine.

As to his claim of finding signal evidence for it in the novels aforementioned, that is another matter. That, I am inclined to think, is little else than the amiable illusion of a zealous patriot eager to appropriate anything that in any department may tend to reflect added luster upon his beloved country .

But, dismissing theory, let me come to a fact, and put it fact-wise ; that is to say, a bit bluntly : By the suffrages of seamen and landsmen alike, *The Wreck of the Grosvenor* entitles the author to the naval crown in current literature. That book led the series of kindred ones by the same hand ; it is the flag-ship, and to name it implies the fleet.

Upon the *Grosvenor's* first appearance—in these waters, I was going to say—all competent judges

exclaimed, each after his own fashion, something to this effect: The very spit of the brine in our faces! What writer, so thoroughly as this one, knows the sea, and the blue water of it; the sailor and the heart of him; the ship, too, and the sailing and handling of a ship ? Besides, to his knowledge he adds invention. And, withal, in his broader humane quality he shares the spirit of Richard H. Dana, a true poet's son, our own admirable "*Man before the Mast.*"

Well, in view of those unanimous verdicts summed up in the foregoing condensed delivery, with what conscientious satisfaction did I but just now, in the heading of this inscription, salute you, W. C. R., by running up your colors at my fore. Would that the craft thus embravened were one of some tonnage, so that the flag might be carried on a loftier spar, commanding an ampler horizon of your recognizing friends.

But the pleasure I take in penning these lines is such that, did a literary inscription imply aught akin to any bestowment, say, or benefit,—which it is so very far indeed from implying,—then, sinner though I am, I should be tempted to repeat that

divine apothegm which, were it repeated forever, would never stale: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." And tho' by the world at large so unworldly a maxim receives a more hospitable welcome at the ear than in the heart,—and no wonder, considering the persistent deceptiveness of so many things mundane,—nevertheless, in one province,—and I mean no other one than literature,—not every individual, I think, at least not every one whose years ought to discharge him from the minor illusions, will dispute it, who has had experience alike in receiving and giving, in one suggestive form or other, sincere contemporary praise. And what, essentially, is such praise? Little else indeed than a less ineloquent form of recognition.

That these thoughts are no spurious ones, never mind from whomsoever proceeding, one naturally appeals to the author of *The Wreck of the Grosvenor*, who, in his duality as a commended novelist and liberal critic in his more especial department, may rightly be deemed an authority well qualified to determine.

Thus far as to matters which may be put into

type. For personal feeling—the printed page is hardly the place for reiterating that. So I close here as I began, wishing you from my heart the most precious things I know of in this world—Health and Content.

JOHN MARR

AND OTHER SAILORS.

JOHN MARR.

JOHN MARR, toward the close of the last century born in America of a mother unknown, and from boyhood up to maturity a sailor under divers flags, disabled at last from further maritime life by a crippling wound received at close quarters with pirates of the Keys, eventually betakes himself for a livelihood to less active employment ashore. There, too, he transfers his rambling disposition acquired as a seafarer.

After a variety of removals, at first as a sailmaker from sea-port to sea-port, then adventurously inland as a rough bench-carpenter, he, finally, in the last-named capacity, settles down about the year 1838 upon what was then a frontier-prairie, sparsely sprinkled with small oak-groves and yet fewer log-houses of a little colony

but recently from one of our elder inland States. Here, putting a period to his rovings, he marries.

Ere long a fever, the bane of new settlements on teeming loam, and whose sallow livery was certain to show itself, after an interval, in the complexions of too many of these people, carries off his young wife and infant child. In one coffin, put together by his own hands, they are committed with meager rites to the earth—another mound, though a small one, in the wide prairie, nor far from where the mound-builders of a race only conjecturable had left their pottery and bones, one common clay, under a strange terrace serpentine in form.

With an honest stillness in his general mien—swarthy and black-browed, with eyes that could soften or flash, but never harden, yet disclosing at times a melancholy depth—this kinless man had affections which, once placed, not readily could be dislodged or resigned to a substituted object. Being now arrived at middle-life, he resolves never to quit the soil that holds the only beings ever connected with him by love in the family tie. His log-house he lets to a new-comer,

one glad enough to get it, and dwells with the household.

While the acuter sense of his bereavement becomes mollified by time, the void at heart abides. Fain, if possible, would he fill that void by cultivating social relations yet nearer than before with a people whose lot he purposes sharing to the end—relations superadded to that mere work-a-day bond arising from participation in the same outward hardships, making reciprocal helpfulness a matter of course. But here, and nobody to blame, he is obstructed.

More familiarly to consort, men of a practical turn must sympathetically converse, and upon topics of real life. But, whether as to persons or events, one cannot always be talking about the present, much less speculating about the future; one must needs recur to the past, which, with the mass of men, where the past is in any personal way a common inheritance, supplies to most practical natures the basis of sympathetic communion.

But the past of John Marr was not the past of these pioneers. Their hands had rested on the plow-tail, his upon the ship's helm. They knew

but their own kind and their own usages ; to him had been revealed something of the checkered globe. So limited unavoidably was the mental reach, and by consequence the range of sympathy, in this particular band of domestic emigrants, hereditary tillers of the soil, that the ocean, but a hearsay to their fathers, had now through yet deeper inland removal become to themselves little more than a rumor traditional and vague.

They were a staid people; staid through habituation to monotonous hardship; ascetics by necessity not less than through moral bias; nearly all of them sincerely, however narrowly, religious. They were kindly at need, after their fashion ; but to a man wonted—as John Marr in his previous homeless sojournings could not but have been—to the free-and-easy tavern-clubs affording cheap recreation of an evening in certain old and comfortable sea-port towns of that time, and yet more familiar with the companionship afloat of the sailors of the same period, something was lacking. That something was geniality, the flower of life springing from some sense of joy in it, more or less. This their lot could not give to

these hard-working endurers of the dispiriting malaria,—men to whom a holiday never came,—and they had too much of uprightness and no art at all or desire to affect what they did not really feel. At a corn-husking, their least grave of gatherings, did the lone-hearted mariner seek to divert his own thoughts from sadness, and in some degree interest theirs, by adverting to aught removed from the crosses and trials of their personal surroundings, naturally enough he would slide into some marine story or picture, but would soon recoil upon himself and be silent, finding no encouragement to proceed. Upon one such occasion an elderly man—a blacksmith, and at Sunday gatherings an earnest exhorter—honestly said to him, "Friend, we know nothing of that here."

Such unresponsiveness in one's fellow-creatures set apart from factitious life, and by their vocation—in those days little helped by machinery—standing, as it were, next of kin to Nature; this, to John Marr, seemed of a piece with the apathy of Nature herself as envisaged to him here on a prairie where none but the perished mound- builders had as yet left a durable mark.

The remnant of Indians thereabout—all but exterminated in their recent and final war with regular white troops, a war waged by the Red Men for their native soil and natural rights—had been coerced into the occupancy of wilds not very far beyond the Mississippi—wilds *then*, but now the seats of municipalities and States. Prior to that, the bisons, once streaming countless in processional herds, or browsing as in an endless battle-line over these vast aboriginal pastures, had retreated, dwindled in number, before the hunters, in main a race distinct from the agricultural pioneers, though generally their advance-guard. Such a double exodus of man and beast left the plain a desert, green or blossoming indeed, but almost as forsaken as the Siberian Obi. Save the prairie-hen, sometimes startled from its lurking-place in the rank grass; and, in their migratory season, pigeons, high overhead on the wing, in dense multitudes eclipsing the day like a passing storm-cloud; save these—there being no wide woods with their underwood—birds were strangely few.

Blank stillness would for hours reign unbroken

on this prairie. "It is the bed of a dried-up sea," said the companionless sailor—no geologist—to himself, musing at twilight upon the fixed undulations of that immense alluvial expanse bounded only by the horizon, and missing there the stir that, to alert eyes and ears, animates at all times the apparent solitudes of the deep.

But a scene quite at variance with one's antecedents may yet prove suggestive of them. Hooped round by a level rim, the prairie was to John Marr a reminder of ocean.

With some of his former shipmates, *chums* on certain cruises, he had contrived, prior to this last and more remote removal, to keep up a little correspondence at odd intervals. But from tidings of anybody or any sort he, in common with the other settlers, was now cut off; quite cut off, except from such news as might be conveyed over the grassy billows by the last-arrived prairie-schooner—the vernacular term, in those parts and times, for the emigrant-wagon arched high over with sail-cloth and voyaging across the vast champaign. There was no reachable post-office as yet; not even the rude little receptive box with lid and leather

hinges, set up at convenient intervals on a stout stake along some solitary green way, affording a perch for birds, and which, later in the unintermitting advance of the frontier, would perhaps decay into a mossy monument, attesting yet another successive overleaped limit of civilized life; a life which in America can to-day hardly be said to have any western bound but the ocean that washes Asia. Throughout these plains, now in places overpopulous with towns overopulent; sweeping plains, elsewhere fenced off in every direction into flourishing farms—pale townsmen and hale farmers alike, in part, the descendants of the first sallow settlers; a region that half a century ago produced little for the sustenance of man, but to-day launching its superabundant wheat-harvest on the world;—of this prairie, now everywhere intersected with wire and rail, hardly can it be said that at the period here written of there was so much as a traceable road. To the long-distance traveler the oak-groves, wide apart, and varying in compass and form; these, with recent settlements, yet more widely separate, offered some landmarks; but otherwise he steered

by the sun. In early midsummer, even going but from one log-encampment to the next, a journey it might be of hours or good part of a day, travel was much like navigation. In some more enriched depressions between the long, green, graduated swells, smooth as those of ocean becalmed receiving and subduing to its own tranquillity the voluminous surge raised by some far-off hurricane of days previous, here one would catch the first indication of advancing strangers either in the distance, as a far sail at sea, by the glistening white canvas of the wagon, the wagon itself wading through the rank vegetation and hidden by it, or, failing that, when near to, in the ears of the team, peeking, if not above the tall tiger-lilies, yet above the yet taller grass.

Luxuriant, this wilderness; but, to its denizen, a friend left behind anywhere in the world seemed not alone absent to sight, but an absentee from existence.

Though John Marr's shipmates could not all have departed life, yet as subjects of meditation they were like phantoms of the dead. As the growing sense of his environment threw him

more and more upon retrospective musings, these phantoms, next to those of his wife and child, became spiritual companions, losing something of their first indistinctness and putting on at last a dim semblance of mute life; and they were lit by that aureola circling over any object of the affections in the past for reunion with which an imaginative heart passionately yearns.

He invokes these visionary ones,—striving, as it were, to get into verbal communion with them, or, under yet stronger illusion, reproaching them for their silence :—

Since as in night's deck-watch ye show,
Why, lads, so silent here to me,
Your watchmate of times long ago ?

Once, for all the darkling sea,
You your voices raised how clearly,
Striking in when tempest sung ;
Hoisting up the storm-sail cheerly,
Life is storm—let storm ! you rung.

Taking things as fated merely,
Child-like though the world ye spanned ;
Nor holding unto life too dearly,
Ye who hold your lives in hand—
Skimmers, who on oceans four
Petrels were, and larks ashore.

O, not from memory lightly flung,
Forgot, like strains no more availing,
The heart to music haughtier strung ;
Nay, frequent near me, never staleing,
Whose good feeling kept ye young.
Like tides that enter creek or stream,
Ye come, ye visit me, or seem
Swimming out from seas of faces,
Alien myriads memory traces,
To enfold me in a dream !

I yearn as ye. But rafts that strain,
Parted, shall they lock again ?
Twined we were, entwined, then riven,
Ever to new embracements driven,
Shifting gulf-weed of the main !
And how if one here shift no more,
Lodged by the flinging surge ashore ?

Nor less, as now, in eve's decline,
Your shadowy fellowship is mine.
Ye float around me, form and feature :—
Tattooings, ear-rings, love-locks curled ;
Barbarians of man's simpler nature,
Unworldly servers of the world.
Yea, present all, and dear to me,
Though shades, or scouring China's sea.

Whither, whither, merchant-sailors,
Whitherward now in roaring gales ?
Competing still, ye huntsman-whalers,
In leviathan's wake what boat prevails ?
And man-of-war's men, whereaway ?
If now no dinned drum beat to quarters
On the wilds of midnight waters—
Foemen looming through the spray ;
Do yet your gangway lanterns, streaming,
Vainly strive to pierce below,
When, tilted from the slant plank gleaming,
A brother you see to darkness go ?

But, gunmates lashed in shotted canvas,
If where long watch-below ye keep,
Never the shrill "*All hands up hammocks !*"
Breaks the spell that charms your sleep,

And summoning trumps might vainly call,
And booming guns implore—
A beat, a heart-beat musters all,
One heart-beat at heart-core.
It musters. But to clasp, retain ;
To see you at the halyards main—
To hear your chorus once again !

BRIDEGROOM DICK.

BRIDEGROOM DICK

(1876.)

SUNNING ourselves in October on a day
Balmy as spring, though the year was in decay,
I lading my pipe, she stirring her tea,
My old woman she says to me,
"Feel ye, old man, how the season mellows ?"
And why should I not, blessed heart alive,
Here mellowing myself, past sixty-five,
To think o' the May-time o' pennoned young fellows
This stripped old hulk here for years may survive.

Ere yet, long ago, we were spliced, Bonny Blue,
(Silvery it gleams down the moon-glade o' time,
Ah, sugar in the bowl and berries in the prime !)
Coxswain I o' the Commodore's crew—

Under me the fellows that manned his fine gig,
Spinning him ashore, a king in full fig.
Chirrupy even when crosses rubbed me,
Bridegroom Dick lieutenants dubbed me.
Pleasant at a yarn, Bob o' Linkum in a song,
Diligent in duty and nattily arrayed,
Favored I was, wife, and *fleeted* right along ;
And though but a tot for such a tall grade,
A high quartermaster at last I was made.

All this, old lassie, you have heard before,
But you listen again for the sake e'en o' me ;
No babble stales o' the good times o' yore
To Joan, if Darby the babbler be.

Babbler ?—O' what ? Addled brains, they forget!
O—quartermaster I ; yes, the signals set,
Hoisted the ensign, mended it when frayed,
Polished up the binnacle, minded the helm,
And prompt every order blithely obeyed.
To me would the officers say a word cheery—
Break through the starch o' the quarter-deck
realm;

His coxswain late, so the Commodore's pet.
Ay, and in night-watches long and weary,
Bored nigh to death with the naval etiquette,
Yearning, too, for fun, some younker, a cadet,
Dropping for time each vain bumptious trick,
Boy-like would unbend to Bridegroom Dick.
But a limit there was—a check, d' ye see :
Those fine young aristocrats knew their degree.

Well, stationed aft where their lordships keep,—
Seldom going forward excepting to sleep,—
I, boozing now on by-gone years,
My betters recall along with my peers.
Recall them ? Wife, but I see them plain :
Alive, alert, every man stirs again.
Ay, and again on the lee-side pacing,
My spy-glass carrying, a truncheon in show,
Turning at the taffrail, my footsteps retracing,
Proud in my duty, again methinks I go.
And Dave, Dainty Dave, I mark where he stands,
Our trim sailing-master, to time the high-noon,
That thingumbob sextant perplexing eyes and
hands,
Squinting at the sun, or twigging o' the moon ;

Then, touching his cap to Old Chock-a-Block
Commanding the quarter-deck,—"Sir, twelve o'clock."

Where sails he now, that trim sailing-master,
Slender, yes, as the ship's sky-s'l pole ?
Dimly I mind me of some sad disaster—
Dainty Dave was dropped from the navy-roll !
And ah, for old Lieutenant Chock-a-Block—
Fast, wife, chock-fast to death's black dock !
Buffeted about the obstreperous ocean,
Fleeted his life, if lagged his promotion.
Little girl, they are all, all gone, I think,
Leaving Bridegroom Dick here with lids that wink.

Where is Ap Catesby ? The fights fought of yore
Famed him, and laced him with epaulets, and more.
But fame is a wake that after-wakes cross,
And the waters wallow all, and laugh *Where 's the loss ?*
But John Bull's bullet in his shoulder bearing
Ballasted Ap in his long seafaring.

The middies they ducked to the man who had messed
With Decatur in the gun-room, or forward pressed
Fighting beside Perry, Hull, Porter, and the rest.

Humped veteran o' the Heart-o'-Oak war,
Moored long in haven where the old heroes are,
Never on *you* did the iron-clads jar !
Your open deck when the boarder assailed,
The frank old heroic hand-to-hand then availed.

But where 's Guert Gan ? Still heads he the van ?
As before Vera-Cruz, when he dashed splashing through
The blue rollers sunned, in his brave gold-and-blue,
And, ere his cutter in keel took the strand,
Aloft waved his sword on the hostile land !
Went up the cheering, the quick chanticleering ;
All hands vying—all colors flying :
"Cock-a-doodle-doo !" and "Row, boys, row !"
"Hey, Starry Banner !" "Hi, Santa Anna !"—
Old Scott's young dash at Mexico.

Fine forces o' the land, fine forces o' the sea,
Fleet, army, and flotilla—tell, heart o' me,
Tell, if you can, whereaway now they be !

But ah, how to speak of the hurricane unchained—
The Union's strands parted in the hawser over-
strained ;
Our flag blown to shreds, anchors gone altogether—
The dashed fleet o' States in Secession's foul
weather.

Lost in the smother o' that wide public stress,
In hearts, private hearts, what ties there were
snapped!
Tell, Hal—vouch, Will, o' the ward-room mess,
On you how the riving thunder-bolt clapped.
With a bead in your eye and beads in your glass,
And a grip o' the flipper, it was part and pass :
"Hal, must it be ? Well, if come indeed the shock,
To North or to South, let the victory cleave,
Vaunt it he may on his dung-hill the cock,
But *Uncle Sam's* eagle never crow will, believe."

Sentiment : ay, while suspended hung all,
Ere the guns against Sumter opened there the ball,

And partners were taken, and the red dance began,
War's red dance o' death !—Well, we, to a man,
We sailors o' the North, wife, how could we lag ?—
Strike with your kin, and you stick to the flag !
But to sailors o' the South that easy way was
barred.
To some, dame, believe (and I speak o' what I
know),
Wormwood the trial and the Uzzite's black shard ;
And the faithfuller the heart, the crueller the
throe.
Duty ? It pulled with more than one string,
This way and that, and anyhow a sting.
The flag and your kin, how be true unto both ?
If one plight ye keep, then ye break the other
troth.
But elect here they must, though the casuists
were out ;
Decide—hurry up—and throttle every doubt.

Of all these thrills thrilled at keelson, and throes,
Little felt the shoddyites a-toasting o' their toes ;
In mart and bazar Lucre chuckled the huzza,
Coining the dollars in the bloody mint of war.

But in men, gray knights o' the Order o' Scars,
And brave boys bound by vows unto Mars,
Nature grappled honor, intertwisting in the strife :—
But some cut the knot with a thoroughgoing knife.
For how when the drums beat ? How in the fray
In Hampton Roads on the fine balmy day ?

There a lull, wife, befell—drop o' silence in the din.
Let us enter that silence ere the belchings re-begin.—
Through a ragged rift aslant in the cannonade's smoke
An iron-clad reveals her repellent broadside
Bodily intact. But a frigate, all oak,
Shows honeycombed by shot, and her deck crimson-dyed.
And a trumpet from port of the ironclad hails,
Summoning the other, whose flag never trails :
"Surrender that frigate, Will ! Surrender,
Or I will sink her—*ram*, and end her !"

'T was Hal. And Will, from the naked heart-o'-oak,
Will, the old messmate, minus trumpet, spoke,
Informally intrepid—"Sink her, and be damned !"*
Enough. Gathering way, the ironclad *rammed*.
The frigate, heeling over, on the wave threw a dusk.
Not sharing in the slant, the clapper of her bell
The fixed metal struck—uninvoked struck the knell
Of the *Cumberland* stillettoed by the *Merrimac's* tusk ;
While, broken in the wound underneath the gun-deck,
Like a sword-fish's blade in leviathan waylaid,
The tusk was left infixed in the fast-foundering wreck.
There, dungeoned in the cockpit, the wounded go down,
And the chaplain with them. But the surges uplift
The prone dead from deck, and for moment they drift

* Historic.

Washed with the swimmers, and the spent swimmers drown.
Nine fathom did she sink,—erect, though hid from light
Save her colours unsurrendered and spars that kept the height.

Nay, pardon, old aunty !— Wife, never let it fall,
That big started tear that hovers on the brim;
I forgot about your nephew and the *Merrimac's* ball ;
No more then of her, since it summons up him.

But talk o' fellows' hearts in the wine's genial cup :—
Trap them in the fate, jamb them in the strait,
Guns speak their hearts then, and speak right up.

The troublous colic o' intestine war
It sets the bowels o' affection ajar.
But, lord, old dame, so spins the whizzing world,
A humming-top, ay, for the little boy-gods
Flogging it well with their smart little rods,
Tittering at time and the coil uncurled.

Now, now, sweetheart, you sidle away,
No, never you like *that* kind o' *gay ;*
But sour if I get, giving truth her due,
Honey-sweet forever, wife, will Dick be to *you !*

But avast with the War ! Why recall racking days
Since set up anew are the slip's started stays ?
Nor less, though the gale we have left behind,
Well may the heave o' the sea remind.
It irks me now, as it troubled me then,
To think o' the fate in the madness o' men.
If Dick was with Farragut on the night-river,
When the boom-chain we burst in the fire-raft's glare,
That blood-dyed the visage as red as the liver ;
In the *Battle for the Bay* too if Dick had a share,
And saw one aloft a-piloting the war—
Trumpet in the whirlwind, a Providence in place—
Our Admiral old whom the captains huzza,
Dick joys in the man nor brags about the race.

But better, wife, I like to booze on the days
Ere the Old Order foundered in these very frays,
And tradition was lost and we learned strange ways.

Often I think on the brave cruises then ;
Resailing them in memory, I hail the press o' men
On the gunned promenade where rolling they go,
Ere the dog-watch expire and break up the show.
The Laced Caps I see between forward guns ;
Away from the powder-room they puff the cigar ;
"Three days more, hey, the donnas and the dons !"
"Your Xeres widow, will you hunt her up, Starr ?"
The Laced Caps laugh, and the bright waves too ;
Very jolly, very wicked, both sea and crew,
Nor heaven looks sour on either, I guess,
Nor Pecksniff he bosses the gods' high mess.

Wistful ye peer, wife, concerned for my head,
And how best to get me betimes to my bed.

But king o' the club, the gayest golden spark,
Sailor o' sailors, what sailor do I mark ?
Tom Tight, Tom Tight, no fine fellow finer,
A cutwater-nose, ay, a spirited soul ;
But, boozing away at the well-brewed bowl,
He never bowled back from that voyage to China.

Tom was lieutenant in the brig-o'-war famed
When an officer was hung for an arch-mutineer,
But a mystery cleaved, and the captain was blamed,
And a rumpus too raised, though his honor it was clear.
And Tom he would say, when the mousers would try him,
And with cup after cup o' Burgundy ply him :
"Gentlemen, in vain with your wassail you beset,
For the more I tipple, the tighter do I get."
No blabber, no, not even with the can—
True to himself and loyal to his clan.

Tom blessed us starboard and d——d us larboard,
Right down from rail to the streak o' the garboard.
Nor less, wife, we liked him.—Tom was a man
In contrast queer with Chaplain Le Fan,
Who blessed us at morn, and at night yet again,
D——ning us only in decorous strain ;
Preaching 'tween the guns—each cutlass in its place—
From text that averred old Adam a hard case.

I see him—Tom—on *horse-block* standing,
Trumpet at mouth, thrown up all amain,
An elephant's bugle, vociferous demanding
Of topmen aloft in the hurricane of rain,
"Letting that sail there your faces flog ?
Manhandle it, men, and you 'll get the good grog !"
O Tom, but he knew a blue-jacket's ways,
And how a lieutenant may genially haze ;
Only a sailor sailors heartily praise.

Wife, where be all these chaps, I wonder ?
Trumpets in the tempest, terrors in the fray,
Boomed their commands along the deck like thunder ;
But silent is the sod, and thunder dies away.

But Captain Turret, *"Old Hemlock"* tall,
(A leaning tower when his tank brimmed all,)
Manœuvre out alive from the war did he ?
Or, too old for that, drift under the lee ?
Kentuckian colossal, who, touching at Madeira,
The huge puncheon shipped o' prime *Santa-Clara* ;
Then rocked along the deck so solemnly !

No whit the less though judicious was enough
In dealing with the Finn who made the great huff ;
Our three-decker's giant, a grand boatswain's mate,
Manliest of men in his own natural senses ;
But driven stark mad by the devil's drugged stuff,
Storming all aboard from his run-ashore late,
Challenging to battle, vouchsafing no pretenses,
A reeling King Ogg, delirious in power,
The quarter-deck carronades he seemed to make cower.
"Put him in *brig* there !" said Lieutenant Marrot.
"Put him in *brig* !" back he mocked like a parrot ;
"Try it, then !" swaying a fist like Thor's sledge,
And making the pigmy constables hedge—
Ship's-corporals and the master-at-arms.
"In *brig* there, I say !"—They dally no more ;
Like hounds let slip on a desperate boar,
Together they pounce on the formidable Finn,
Pinion and cripple and hustle him in,
Anon, under sentry, between twin guns,
He slides off in drowse, and the long night runs.

Morning brings a summons. Whistling it calls,
Shrilled through the pipes of the boatswain's four aids ;
Thrilled down the hatchways along the dusk halls :
Muster to the Scourge !—Dawn of doom and its blast !
As from cemeteries raised, sailors swarm before the mast,
Tumbling up the ladders from the ship's nether shades.

Keeping in the background and taking small part,
Lounging at their ease, indifferent in face,
Behold the trim marines uncompromised in heart;
Their Major, buttoned up, near the staff finds room—
The staff o' lieutenants standing grouped in their place.
All the Laced Caps o' the ward-room come,
The Chaplain among them, disciplined and dumb.
The blue-nosed boatswain, complexioned like slag,
Like a blue Monday shows—his implements in bag.
Executioners, his aids, a couple by him stand,
At a nod there the thongs to receive from his hand.

Never venturing a caveat whatever may betide,
Though functionally here on humanity's side,
The grave Surgeon shows, like the formal physician
Attending the rack o' the Spanish Inquisition.

The angel o' the "brig" brings his prisoner up ;
Then, steadied by his old *Santa-Clara*, a sup,
Heading all erect, the ranged assizes there,
Lo, Captain Turret, and under starred bunting
(A florid full face and fine silvered hair,)
Gigantic the yet greater giant confronting.

Now the culprit he liked, as a tall captain can
A Titan subordinate and true *sailor-man ;*
And frequent he 'd shown it—no worded advance,
But flattering the Finn with a well-timed glance.
But what of that now ? In the martinet-mien
Read the *Articles of War*, heed the naval routine ;
While, cut to the heart a dishonor there to win,
Restored to his senses, stood the Anak Finn ;
In racked self-control the squeezed tears peeping,
Scalding the eye with repressed inkeeping.
Discipline must be; the scourge is deemed due.

But ah, for the sickening and strange heart-benumbing,
Compassionate abasement in shipmates that view;
Such a grand champion shamed there succumbing !

"Brown, tie him up."—The cord he brooked :
How else ? — his arms spread apart — never threaping ;
No, never he flinched, never sideways he looked,
Peeled to the waistband, the marble flesh creeping,
Lashed by the sleet the officious winds urge.
In function his fellows their fellowship merge—
The twain standing nigh—the two boatswain's mates,
Sailors of his grade, ay, and brothers of his mess.
With sharp thongs adroop the junior one awaits
The word to uplift.

"Untie him—so !
Submission is enough.—Man, you may go."
Then, promenading aft, brushing fat Purser Smart,
"Flog ? Never meant it—had n't any heart.
Degrade that tall fellow ?"—Such, wife, was he,

Old Captain Turret, who the brave wine could stow.
Magnanimous, you think ?—But what does Dick see ?
Apron to your eye ! Why, never fell a blow ;
Cheer up, old wifie, 't was a long time ago.

But where 's that sore one, crabbed and severe,
Lieutenant Don Lumbago, an arch scrutineer ?
Call the roll to-day, would he answer—*Here !*
When the *Blixum's* fellows to quarters mustered
How he 'd lurch along the lane of gun-crews clustered,
Testy as touchwood, to pry and to peer.
Jerking his sword underneath larboard arm,
He ground his worn grinders to keep himself calm.
Composed in his nerves, from the fidgets set free,
Tell, Sweet Wrinkles, alive now is he,
In Paradise a parlor where the even tempers be ?

Where 's Commander All-a-Tanto ?
Where 's Orlop Bob singing up from below ?
Where 's Rhyming Ned? has he spun his last canto?
Where 's Jewsharp Jim? Where 's Ringadoon Joe?

Ah, for the music over and done,
The band all dismissed save the droned trombone !
Where 's Glen o' the gun-room, who loved Hot-Scotch—
Glen, prompt and cool in a perilous watch ?
Where 's flaxen-haired Phil ? a gray lieutenant ?
Or rubicund, flying a dignified pennant ?
But where sleeps his brother ?—the cruise it was o'er,
But ah, for death's grip that welcomed him ashore !
Where 's Sid, the cadet, so frank in his brag,
Whose toast was audacious—*"Here 's Sid, and Sid's flag !"*
Like holiday-craft that have sunk unknown,
May a lark of a lad go lonely down ?
Who takes the census under the sea ?
Can others like old ensigns be,
Bunting I hoisted to flutter at the gaff—
Rags in end that once were flags
Gallant streaming from the staff ?
Such scurvy doom could the chances deal
To Top-Gallant Harry and Jack Genteel ?

Lo, Genteel Jack in hurricane weather,
Shagged like a bear, like a red lion roaring ;
But O, so fine in his chapeau and feather,
In port to the ladies never once *jawing ;*
All bland *politesse*, how urbane was he—
"Oui, mademoiselle"—"Ma chère amie !"

'T was Jack got up the ball at Naples,
Gay in the old *Ohio* glorious ;
His hair was curled by the berth-deck barber,
Never you 'd deemed him a cub of rude Boreas ;
In tight little pumps, with the grand dames in rout,
A-flinging his shapely foot all about ;
His watch-chain with love's jeweled tokens abounding,
Curls ambrosial shaking out odors,
Waltzing along the batteries, astounding
The gunner glum and the grim-visaged loaders

Wife, where be all these blades, I wonder,
Pennoned fine fellows, so strong, so gay ?
Never their colors with a dip dived under ;
Have they hauled them down in a lack-lustre day,
Or beached their boats in the Far, Far Away ?

Hither and thither, blown wide asunder,
Where 's this fleet, I wonder and wonder.
Slipt their cables, rattled their adieu,
(Whereaway pointing ? to what rendezvous ?)
Out of sight, out of mind, like the crack *Constitution*,
And many a keel time never shall renew—
Bon Homme Dick o' the buff Revolution,
The *Black Cockade* and the staunch *True-Blue*.

Doff hats to Decatur ! But where is his blazon ?
Must merited fame endure time's wrong—
Glory's ripe grape wizen up to a raisin ?
Yes ! for Nature teems, and the years are strong,
And who can keep the tally o' the names that fleet along !

But his frigate, wife, his bride ? Would black-smiths brown
Into smithereens smite the solid old renown ?

Rivetting the bolts in the iron-clad's shell,
Hark to the hammers with a *rat-tat-tat ;*
"Handier a *derby* than a laced cocked hat !

The *Monitor* was ugly, but she served us right well,
Better than the *Cumberland*, a beauty and the belle."

Better than the Cumberland !—Heart alive in me !
That battlemented hull, Tantallon o' the sea,
Kicked in, as at Boston the taxed chests o' tea !
Ay, spurned by the *ram*, once a tall, shapely craft,
But lopped by the *Rebs* to an iron-beaked raft—
A blacksmith's unicorn armed *cap-a-pie*.

Under the water-line a *ram's* blow is dealt :
And foul fall the knuckles that strike below the belt.
Nor brave the inventions that serve to replace
The openness of valor while dismantling the grace.

Aloof from all this and the never-ending game,
Tantamount to teetering, plot and counterplot ;
Impenetrable armor—all-perforating shot ;

Aloof, bless God, ride the war-ships of old,
A grand fleet moored in the roadstead of fame ;
Not submarine sneaks with *them* are enrolled ;
Their long shadows dwarf us, their flags are as flame.

Don't fidget so, wife ; an old man's passion
Amounts to no more than this smoke that I puff ;
There, there, now, buss me in good old fashion ;
A died-down candle will flicker in the snuff.

But one last thing let your old babbler say,
What Decatur's coxswain said who was long ago hearsed,
"Take in your flying-kites, for there comes a lubber's day
When gallant things will go, and the three-deckers first."

My pipe is smoked out, and the grog runs slack ;
But booze away, wife, at your blessed Bohea ;
This empty can here must needs solace me—
Nay, sweetheart, nay ; I take that back ;
Dick drinks from your eyes and he finds no lack !

TOM DEADLIGHT.

TOM DEADLIGHT.

(1810.)

DURING a tempest encountered homeward-bound from the Mediterranean, a grizzled petty-officer, one of the two captains of the forecastle, dying at night in his hammock, swung in the *sick-bay* under the tiered gun-decks of the British *Dreadnaught*, 98, wandering in his mind, though with glimpses of sanity, and starting up at whiles, sings by snatches his good-bye and last injunctions to two messmates, his watchers, one of whom fans the fevered tar with the flap of his old sou'-wester. Some names and phrases, with here and there a line, or part of one; these, in his aberration, wrested into incoherency from their original connection and import, he involuntarily derives, as he does the measure, from a famous old sea-ditty, whose cadences, long rife, and now humming in the collapsing brain, attune the last flutterings of distempered thought.

Farewell and adieu to you noble hearties,—
Farewell and adieu to you ladies of Spain,
For I 've received orders for to sail for the Deadman,
But hope with the grand fleet to see you again.

I have hove my ship to, with main-top-sail aback, boys ;
I have hove my ship to, for the strike soundings clear—
The black scud a' flying ; but, by God's blessing, dam' me,
Right up the Channel for the Deadman I'll steer.

I have worried through the waters that are callèd the Doldrums,
And growled at Sargasso that clogs while ye grope—
Blast my eyes ; but the lightship is hid by the mist, lads :—
Flying Dutchman—odds bobbs—off the Cape of Good Hope !

But what 's this I feel that is fanning my cheek, Matt ?
The white goney's wing ?—how she rolls !—'t is the Cape !—
Give my kit to the mess, Jock, for kin none is mine, none ;
And tell *Holy Joe* to avast with the crape.

Dead reckoning, says *Joe*, it won't do to go by ;
But they doused all the glims, Matt, in sky t' other night.
Dead reckoning is good for to sail for the Deadman ;
And Tom Deadlight he thinks it may reckon near right.

The signal !—it streams for the grand fleet to anchor.
The captains—the trumpets—the hullabaloo !
Stand by for blue-blazes, and mind your shank-painters,
For the Lord High Admiral, he 's squinting at you !

But give me my *tot*, Matt, before I roll over ;
  Jock, let 's have your flipper, it 's good for to feel ;
And don't sew me up without *baccy* in mouth, boys,
  And don't blubber like lubbers when I turn up my keel.

JACK ROY.

JACK ROY.

KEPT up by relays of generations young
Never dies at halyards the blithe chorus sung ;
While in sands, sounds, and seas where the storm-petrels cry,
Dropped mute around the globe, these halyard singers lie.
Short-lived the clippers for racing-cups that run,
And speeds in life's career many a lavish mother's-son.

But thou, manly king o' the old *Splendid's* crew,
The ribbons o' thy hat still a-fluttering, should fly—
A challenge, and forever, nor the bravery should rue.
Only in a tussle for the starry flag high,
When 't is piety to do, and privilege to die,

Then, only then, would heaven think to lop
Such a cedar as the captain o' the *Splendid's* main-top :
A belted sea-gentleman ; a gallant, off-hand
Mercutio indifferent in life's gay command.
Magnanimous in humor ; when the splintering shot fell,
"Tooth-picks a-plenty, lads ; thank 'em with a shell !"

Sang Larry o' the Cannakin, smuggler o' the wine,
At mess between guns, lad in jovial recline :
"In Limbo our Jack he would chirrup up a cheer,
The martinet there find a chaffing mutineer ;
From a thousand fathoms down under hatches o' your Hades,
He 'd ascend in love-ditty, kissing fingers to your ladies !"

Never relishing the knave, though allowing for the menial,
Nor overmuch the king, Jack, nor prodigally genial.

Ashore on liberty he flashed in escapade,
Vaulting over life in its levelness of grade,
Like the dolphin off Africa in rainbow a-sweeping—
Arch iridescent shot from seas languid sleeping.

Larking with thy life, if a joy but a toy,
Heroic in thy levity wert thou, Jack Roy.

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 wind-
ing-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—
Toledoes 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 warship's flight.
  The sea-fowl here, whose hearts none know,
They followed late the flagship 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."

To-night '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 ply
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 victory'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 ÆOLIAN HARP

AT THE SURF INN.

THE ÆOLIAN 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*,
To 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 beclogged :
  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 ambuscade
Waylayingly it drifteth.

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

MINOR SEA-PIECES.

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 :
Wrecked 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 ! Brava, 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 traceries 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
Atilt impending—kept their place.
Seals, dozing sleek on sliddery ledges
Slipt 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 dead indifference 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, strown in flocks, what cheek-flushed myriads lie
Dimpling in dream—unconscious slumberers mere,
While billows endless round the beaches die.

PEBBLES.

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 even by their pitiless breath
Distilled in wholesome dew named rosmarine.

END.

Editorial Notes

This edition reproduces the 1888 De Vinne Press first edition of *John Marr and Other Sailors*. All line and page breaks from the original have been preserved, as have spelling, punctuation, capitalization, drop capitals, page numbers, and signature identification numbers. Following the typesetting practice of that era, colons, semi-colons, question marks, and exclamation points are preceded by a word space. The text typeface is Georgia; the display face on the title page is Perpetua Titling.

Typographical errors have not been corrected. The only two found are noted here: missing periods at line ends, after "loaders" at 47.18, and after "down" at 96.12.

Ultimately, the Northwestern-Newberry edition will establish and make available the most authoritative texts of the poems and prose pieces found in *John Marr and Other Sailors*. Until then, the texts presented here are offered for the convenience and consideration of researchers, scholars, and readers. Users are encouraged to download, save, print, copy from, and link to this file, but are asked not to publish or post the complete "work" elsewhere without first obtaining permission.

Charles Haberstroh, in his facsimile edition of *John Marr and Other Sailors* (Norwood Editions, 1977), provides a census of known copies of the first edition and reports the following emendations made in Melville's hand or in his wife's hand in presentation copies of the volume:

Page.line	*De Vinne 1888*	*MS emendation*
21.4	hold	held
33.12	one	either
36.9	jamb	jam
38.19	boozing	bowsing
38.20	that voyage	that last voyage
42.15	shows	lours
49.8	armed	in armor
50.15	booze	bowse
79.11	To	For
87.14	Wrecked	Dropped
96.22	dead indifference	dense stolidity

Some of these alterations were incorporated in the 1922 edition of *John Marr and Other Poems by Herman Melville*, prepared by Henry Chapin (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1922). That volume omits the prose found in the first edition of *John Marr* and includes additional verse from *Mardi*, *Timoleon*, *Battle-Pieces* and *Clarel*.

These changes were also incorporated in the 1924 edition of *John Marr* in *The Works of Herman Melville: Standard Edition, Volume XVI* (London: Constable, 1924). That edition also added the following "prefatory paragraph concerning sailors' oaths . . . from a MS. note in Melville's handwriting inserted in his copy of *John Marr* and marked as referring to that book":

> Touching certain expletives in the verse, it should be borne in mind that with sailors their profane language is essentially without profane purpose. Doubtless the originator of an exclamative oath passionately intends for the moment whatever etymological meaning it may have, but in generations of parroted repetition the ejaculation becomes a mechanical habit less of the utterer than of his organ of utterance; and, ethically viewed, is but a percussion of the air.
>
> Hence, however reprehensible with the polite a sailor's habitual swearing may be, it is yet reverently to be presumed that the Recording Angel makes no note of it in that book wherein transgressions of the proprieties are never entered; the discriminating scribe setting down not the trespass of the tongue but the sins of the heart.

"W. C. R.," to whom the volume *John Marr* was dedicated, was William Clark Russell (1844–1911). His *The Wreck of the "Grosvenor": An Account of the Mutiny of the Crew and the Loss of the Ship When Trying to Make the Bermudas* was first published in 1875. Russell later edited an edition of *Typee,* published by John Lane (London & New York, 1904).

Paul Royster
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
12 December 2005