

THE SEA WIND

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Where the sea wind lists, there the sea wind blows,
And a vagrant wind is he.
If the sound thereof that far shore knows,
Yet the shore knows not where the wind's breath goes,
Nor whence his course may be;
For his outgoings God gives when He brings
The winds from His treasury.

Before the day he is up and away,
And he travels steadily,
As he follows the track of the fishing-smack,
Bound out for the grounds, and he brings it back,
By the way of port and starboard tack
And a head-wind's energy,
When at even-fall the beacons call
For the whole fleet's company.

When the storm-signals fly, his heart beats high:
Like a reveller flushed with wine,
He reels with the clouds through their dark rain-shrouds,
From sea-line to far sea-line.
With the voice of the thunder and the breakers under,
His shout goes up to God:
"The prize is won, and Thy will is done!
For Thine arrows hurled abroad
Were my comrades-in-arms, while Death's alarms
On the crest of Thy waves were cast
Across the deck of the stranded wreck,
When, swept from their hold on yard and mast,
Thy mariners came to Thee:
Now their souls are Thine, and their bodies mine
For the scavengers of the sea."

But his breath is mild for the sailor's child;
And when the dusk is nigh,
Round a pink-lipped shell he weaves his spell
For its ocean-lullaby,—
A dream-song, borne through the Gates of Horn
From the shores of Aready.

Now high, now low, doth the sea wind blow,
Past the high and the low country;
And the small boats come, and the great ships go,
And their havens all know we;
But the sea wind cruising to and fro
Has ports-of-call where we may not go,
Whose fairways no spar-buoys show,
For a vagrant wind is he.