

ROSAMUND.

He blew with His winds, and they were scattered.

"ONE soweth and another reapeth." Ay,
Too true, too true. One soweth — unaware
Cometh a reaper stealthily while he dreams,
Bindeth the golden sheaf, and in his bosom
As 'twere between the dewfall and the dawn
Bears it away. Who other was to blame?
Is it I? Is it I? — No verily, not I,
'Twas a good action, and I smart therefore;
Oblivion of a righteous enmity
Wrought me this wrong. I pay with my self-
ruth

That I had ruth toward mine enemy;
It needed not to slay mine enemy,
Only to let him lie and succorless
Drift to the foot o' the Everlasting Throne;
Being mine enemy, he had not accused
One of my nation there of unkind deeds
Or aught the way of war forbids.

Let be!

I will not think upon it. Yet she was —
O, she was dear; my dutiful, dear child.
One soweth — Nay, but I will tell this out,
The first fytte was the best, I call it such
For now as some old song men think on it.

I dwell where England narrows running north;
And while our hay was cut came rumors up
Humming and swarming round our heads like
bees:

"Drake from the bay of Cadiz hath come home,
And they are forth, the Spaniards with a force
Invincible."

"The Prince of Parma, couched
At Dunkirk, e'en by torchlight makes to toil
His shipwright thousands — thousands in the ports
Of Flanders and Brabant. An hundred hendes
Transports to his great squadron adding, all
For our confusion."

"England's great ally
Henry of France, by insurrection fallen,
Of him the said Prince Parma mocking cries,
He shall not help the Queen of England now
Not even with his tears, more needing them
To weep his own misfortune."

Was that all
The truth? Not half, and yet it was enough
(Albeit not half that half was well believed),
For all the land stirred in the half belief
As dreamers stir about to wake; and now
Comes the Queen's message, all her lieges bid
To rise, "lieftendants, and the better sort
Of gentlemen" whereby the Queen's grace meant,
As it may seem the sort that willed to rise
And arm, and come to aid her.

Distance wrought
Safety for us, my neighbors and near friends,
The peril lay along our channel coast
And marked the city, undefended fair
Rich London. O to think of Spanish mail
Ringing — of riotous conquerors in her street,
Chasing and frightening (would there were no more
To think on) her fair wives and her fair maids
— But hope is fain to deem them forth of her.

Then Spain to the sacking; then they tear away
Arras and carved work. O then they break
And toss, and mar her quaint orfèverie
Priceless — then split the wine kegs, spill the
mead,

Trail out the pride of ages in the dust;
Turn over with pikes her silken merchandise,
Strip off the pictures of her kings, and spoil
Their palaces that nigh five hundred years
Have rued no alien footsteps on the floor,
And work — for the days of miracle are gone —
All unimaginable waste and woe.

Some cried, "But England hath the better cause;
We think not those good days indeed are done;
We look to Heaven for aid on England's side."
Then other, "Nay, the harvest is above,
God comforts there His own, and ill men leaves
To run long scores up in this present world,
And pay in another.

Look not here for aid.

Latimer, poor old saint, died in the street
With nigh, men say, three hundred of his kind,
All bid to look for worse death after death,
Succorless, comfortless, unfriended, curst.
Mary, and Gardiner, and the Pope's man Pole
Died upon down, lulled in a silken shade,
Soothed with assurance of a waiting heaven,
And Peter peering through the golden gate,
With his gold key in 's hand to let them in."

"Nay, leave," quoth I, "the martyrs to their
heaven,
And all who live the better that they died.

But look you now, a nation hath no heaven,
A nation's life and work and wickedness
And punishment — or otherwise, I say
A nation's life and goodness and reward
Are here. And in my nation's righteous cause
I look for aid, and cry, So HELP ME GOD
As I will help my righteous nation now
With all the best I have, and know, and am,
I trust Thou wilt not let her light be quenched;
I go to aid, and if I fall — I fall,
And, God of nations, leave my soul to Thee."

Many did say like words, and all would give
Of gold, of weapons, and of horses that
They had to hand or on the spur o' the time
Could gather. My fair dame did sell her rings,
So others. And they sent us well equipped
Who minded to be in the coming fray
Whether by land or sea; my hope the last,
For I of old therewith was conversant.

Then as we rode down southward all the land
Was at her harvesting. The oats were cut
Ere we were three days down, and then the wheat,
And the wide country spite of loathed threat
Was busy. There was news to hearten us:
The Hollanders were coming roundly in
With sixty ships of war, all fierce, and full
Of spleen, for not alone our sake but theirs
Willing to brave encounter where they might.

So after five days we did sight the Sound,
And look on Plymouth harbor from the hill.
Then I full glad drew bridle, lighted straight,
Ban down and mingled with a waiting crowd.

Many stood gazing on the level deep
That scarce did tremble; 'twas in hue as sloes
That hang till winter on a leafless bough,
So black bulged down upon it a great cloud
And probed it through and through with forkèd stabs
Incessant, and rolled on it thunder bursts
Till the dark water lowered as one afraid.

That was afar. The land and nearer sea
Lay sweltering in hot sunshine. The brown beach
Scarce whispered, for a soft incoming tide
Was gentle with it. Green the water lapped
And sparkled at all edges. The night-heavens
Are not more thickly speckled o'er with stars
Than that fair harbor with its fishing craft.
And crowds of galleys shooting to and fro
Did feed the ships of war with their stout crews,
And bear aboard fresh water, furniture
Of war, much lesser victual, sallets, fruit,
All manner equipment for the squadron, sails,
Long spars.

Also was chaffering on the Hoe,
Buying and bargaining, taking of leave
With tears and kisses, while on all hands pushed
Tall lusty men with baskets on their heads
Piled of fresh bread, and biscuit newly drawn.

Then shouts, "The captains!"

Raleigh, Hawkins, Drake,
Old Martin Frobisher, and many more;
Howard, the Lord High Admiral, headed them —
They coming leisurely from the bowling green,
Elbowed their way. For in their stoutness loth
To hurry when ill news first brake on them,

They playing a match ashore — ill news I say,
"The Spaniards are toward" — while panic-struck
The people ran about them, Drake cries out,
Knowing their fear should make the danger worse,
"Spaniards, my masters! Let the Spaniards wait.
Fall not a-shouting for the boats; is time
To play the match out, ay to win, and then
To beat the Spaniards."

So the rest gave way
At his insistence, playing that afternoon
The bravest match (one saith) was ever scored.

'Twas no time lost; nay, not a moment lost;
For look you, when the winning cast was made,
The town was calm, the anchors were all up,
The boats were manned to row them each to his
ship,

The lowering cloud in the offing had gone south
Against the wind, and all was work, stir, heed,
Nothing forgot, nor grudged, nor slurred, and most
Men easy at heart as those brave sailors seemed.

And specially the women had put by
On a sudden their deep dread; yon Cornish coast
Neared of his insolency by the foe,
With his high seacastles numerous, seaforts
Many, his galleys out of number, manned
Each by three hundred slaves chained to the oar;
All his strong fleet of lesser ships, but great
As any of ours — why that same Cornish coast
Might have lain farther than the far west land,
So had a few stout-hearted looks and word
Wasted the meaning, chilled the menace of
That frightful danger, imminent, hard at hand.

"The captains come, the captains!" and I turned
As they drew on. I marked the urgency
Flashing in each man's eye: fain to be forth
But willing to be held at leisure. Then
Cried a fair woman of the better sort
To Howard, passing by her pannier'd ass,
"Apples, Lord Admiral, good captains all,
Look you, red apples sharp and sweet are these."

Quoth he a little chafed, "Let be, let be,
No time is this for bargaining, good dame.
Let be;" and pushing past, "Beshrew thy heart
(And mine that I should say it), bargain! nay.
I meant not bargaining," she falters; crying,
"I brought them my poor gift. Pray you now take,
Pray you."

He stops, and with a childlike smile
That makes the dame amend, stoops down to
choose,
While I step up that love not many words,
"What should he do," quoth I, "to help this need
That hath a bag of money, and good will?"
"Charter a ship," he saith, nor e'er looks up,
"And put aboard her victual, tackle, shot,
Aught he can lay his hand on — look he give
Wide sea room to the Spanish hounds, make sail
For ships of ours, to ease of wounded men,
And succor with that freight he brings withal."

His foot, yet speaking, was aboard his boat,
His comrades, each red apples in the hand,
Come after, and with blessings manifold
Cheering, and cries, "Good luck, good luck!" they
speed.

'Twas three years three months past.
O yet methinks
I hear that thunder crash i' the offing; hear
Their words who when the crowd melted away
Gathered together. Comrades we of old,
About to adventure us at Howard's hest
On the unsafe sea. For he, a Catholic,
As is my wife, and therefore my one child,
Detested and defied th' most Catholic King
Philip. He, trusted of her grace — and cause
She had, the nation following suit — he deemed,
'Twas whisper'd, ay and Raleigh, and Francis
Drake
No less, the event of battle doubtfuller
Than English tongue might own; the peril dread
As aught in this world ever can be deemed
That is not yet past praying for.

So far
So good. As birds awaked do stretch their wings
The ships did stretch forth sail, full clad they
towered
And right into the sunset went, hull down
E'en with the sun.

To us in twilight left,
Glory being over, came despondent thought
That mocked men's eager act. From many a hill,
As if the land complained to Heaven, they sent
A towering shaft of murky incense high,
Livid with black despair in lieu of praise.
The green wood hissed at every beacon's edge
That widen'd fear. The smell of pitchpots fled
Far over the field, and tongues of fire leaped up,
Ay, till all England woke, and knew, and wailed.

But we i' the night through that detested reek
Rode eastward. Every mariner's voice was given
'Gainst any fear for the western shires. The cry
Was all, "They sail for Calais Roads, and thence,
The goal is London."

Naught slept, man nor beast.
Ravens and rooks flew forth, and with black wings,
Affrighted, swept our eyes. Pale eddying moths
Came by in crowds and whirled them on the flames.

We rode till pierced those beacon fires the shafts
O' the sun, and their red smouldering ashes dulled.
Beside them, scorched, smoke-blackened, weary,
 leaned
Men that had fed them, dropped their tired arms
And dozed.

And also through that day we rode,
Till reapers at their nooning sat awhile
On the shady side of corn-shocks: all the talk
Of high, of low, or them that went or stayed
Determined but unhopeful; desperate
To strike a blow for England ere she fell.

And ever loomed the Spaniard to our thought,
Still waxed the fame of that great Armament —
New horsemen joining, swelled it more and more —
Their bulky ship galleons having five decks,
Zabraes, pataches, galleys of Portugal,
Caravels rowed with oars, their galliasses
Vast, and complete with chapels, chambers, towers.
And in the said ships of free mariners
Eight thousand, and of slaves two thousand more,
An army twenty thousand strong. O then

Of culverin, of double culverin,
Ordnance and arms, all furniture of war,
Victual, and last their fierceness and great spleen,
Willing to founder, burn, split, wreck themselves,
But they would land, fight, overcome, and reign.

Then would we count up England. Set by theirs,
Her fleet as walnut shells. And a few pikes
Stored in the belfries, and a few brave men
For wielding them. But as the morning wore,
And we went ever eastward, ever on,
Poured forth, poured down, a marching multitude
With stir about the towns; and wagons rolled
With offerings for the army and the fleet.
Then to our hearts valor crept home again,
The loathèd name of Alva fanning it;
Alva who did convert from our old faith
With many a black deed done for a white cause
(So spake they erewhile to it dedicate)
Them whom not death could change, nor fire, nor
 sword,
To thirst for his undoing.

Ay, as I am a Christian man, our thirst
Was comparable with Queen Mary's. All
The talk was of confounding heretics,
The heretics the Spaniards. Yet methought,
"O their great multitude! Not harbor room
On our long coast for that great multitude.
They land — for who can let them? — give us
 battle,
And after give us burial. Who but they,
For he that liveth shall be flying north
To bear off wife and child. Our very graves

Shall Spaniards dig, and in the daisied grass
Trample them down."

Ay, whoso will be brave,
Let him be brave beforehand. After th' event
If by good pleasure of God it go as then
He shall be brave an liketh him. I say
Was no man but that deadly peril feared.

Nights riding two. Scant rest. Days riding three,
Then Foulkstone. Need is none to tell all forth
The gathering stores and men, the charter'd ship
That I, with two, my friends, got ready for sea.
Ready she was, so many another, small
But nimble; and we sailing hugged the shore,
Scarce venturing out, so Drake had willed, a league,
And running westward aye as best we might,
When suddenly — behold them!

On they rocked,
Majestical, slow, sailing with the wind.
O such a sight! O such a sight, mine eyes,
Never shall you see more!

In crescent form,
A vasty crescent night two leagues across
From horn to horn, the lesser ships within,
The great without, they did bestride as 'twere
And make a township on the narrow seas.

It was about the point of dawn: and light.
All gray the sea, and ghostly gray the ships;
And after in the offing rocked our fleet,
Having lain quiet in the summer dark.

O then methought, "Flash, blessed gold of dawn,
And touch the topsails of our Admiral,

That he may after guide an emulous flock,
Old England's innocent white bleating lambs.
Let Spain within a pike's length hear them bleat,
Delivering of their pretty talk in a tongue
Whose meaning cries not for interpreter."

And while I spoke, their topsails, friend and foe,
Glittered — and there was noise of guns; pale
smoke
Lagged after, curdling on the sun-fleck'd main.
And after that? What after that, my soul?
Who ever saw weakling white butterflies
Chasing of gallant swans, and charging them,
And spitting at them long red streaks of flame?
We saw the ships of England even so
As in my vaunting wish that mocked itself
With "Fool, O fool, to brag at the edge of loss."
We saw the ships of England even so
Run at the Spaniards on a wind, lay to,
Bespatter them with hail of battle, then
Take their prerogative of nimble steerage,
Fly off, and ere the enemy, heavy in hand,
Delivered his reply to the wasteful wave
That made its grave of foam, race out of range,
Then tack and crowd all sail, and after them
Again.

So harass'd they that mighty foe,
Moving in all its bravery to the east.
And some were fine with pictures of the saints,
Angels with flying hair and peakèd wings,
And high red crosses wrought upon their sails;
From every mast brave flag or ensign flew,
And their long silken pennons serpented

Loose to the morning. And the galley slaves,
Albeit their chains did clink, sang at the oar.

The sea was striped e'en like a tiger skin
With wide ship wakes.

And many cried, amazed,

"What means their patience?"

"Lo you," others said,

"They pay with fear for their great costliness.
Some of their costliest needs must other guard;
Once guarded and in port look to yourselves,
They count one hundred and fifty. It behoves
Better they suffer this long running fight—
Better for them than that they give us battle,
And so delay the shelter of their roads.

"Two of their caravels we sank, and one
(Fouled with her consort in the rigging) took
Ere she could catch the wind when she rode free.
And we have riddled many a sail, and split
Of spars a score or two. What then? To-morrow
They look to straddle across the strait, and hold—
Having aye Calais for a shelter—hold
Our ships in fight. To-morrow shall give account
For our to-day. They will not we pass north
To meddle with Parma's flotilla; their hope
Being Parma, and a convoy they would be
For his flat boats that bode invasion to us;
And if he reach to London—ruin, defeat."

Three fleets the sun went down on, theirs of fame
Th' Armada. After space old England's few;
And after that our dancing cockle-shells,

The volunteers. They took some pride in us,
For we were nimble, and we brought them powder,
Shot, weapons. They were short of these. Ill
found,

Ill found. The bitter fruit of evil thrift.
But while obsequious, darting here and there,
We took their messages from ship to ship,
From ship to shore, the moving majesties
Made Calais Roads, cast anchor, all their less
In the middle ward; their greater ships outside
Impregnable castles fearing not assault.

So did we read their thought, and read it wrong,
While after the running fight we rode at ease,
For many (as is the way of Englishmen)
Having made light of our stout deeds, and light
O' the effects proceeding, saw these spread
To view. The Spanish Admiral's mighty host,
Albeit not broken, harass'd.

Some did tow

Others that we had plagued, disabled, rent;
Many full heavily damaged made their berths.

Then did the English anchor out of range.
To close was not their wisdom with such foe,
Rather to chase him, following in the rear.
Ay, truly they were giants in our eyes
And in our own. They took scant heed of us,
And we looked on, and knew not what to think,
Only that we were lost men, a lost Isle,
In every Spaniard's mind, both great and small.

But no such thought had place in Howard's soul,
And when 'twas dark, and all their sails were
furled,