

ON LIFE'S OCEAN.

SHORELESS and measureless, restless eternally,
 Ever the same to the left, to the right ;
 Darkness in front of us, uplooming dismally,
 Darkness behind as the blackness of night !

Here it is calm as a pool in the prairie-land,
 There it is white in its rage with a reef ;
 Here it is bright as a phantom of Fairy-land,
 There it is dark as the gloom-land of Grief.

Now it is slow, and again it is currentless,
 Then it is swift as the Ottawa's tide ;
 Now not a breeze bellies sails that hang motionless,
 Then shrieks a gale that no sailor may ride.

Fierce though the storms that anon bellow over it,
 Frail are the vessels that over it glide ;
 Tossed like its spray are the shallops that cover it,
 Toys of its tempests, its calms and its tide.

Oft must they drive through the mist that is shrouding them
 Straight on the rocks where no warning bell tolls ;
 Oft must they sail where a beacon gleams crowding them
 On to the treacherous sands of its shoals.

They who are weak labor wearily, wearily,
 Helplessly buffeted, glad to be gone,
 Sinking at nightfall 'mid winds sighing drearily,
 Never once missed, and the billows roll on.

Many a seaman wrecks wilfully, wilfully,--
 So say the prudent whom Fortune has cheered ;
 They see where he foundered, and steered from it skilfully,
 But know not the breakers his strong arm had cleared.

Sometimes one sinks, and some sigh for him mournfully,
 Sad he no longer their sea-mate may be ;
 But what of the words they had uttered so scornfully
 When half his vessel was under the sea ?

Better a cheer when the white waves were tossing him ;
 Better a light when the gloom gathered round ;
 Better a line when the current was crossing him,
 Than cannon to boom when his keel is aground.

Shoreless and measureless, restless eternally,
 We are the foam of thy dark billow's crest ;
 Borne from his mane on the wind moaning dismally,
 Whither ? What matter, if only to rest ?

WALT. A. RATCLIFFE.

Listowel, Feb., 1896.

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