

The Vision of the Northmen.

(ORATION DELIVERED AT THE COMMENCEMENT EXERCISES,
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LONG years before Columbus found for Spain
The Western World, a venturous prow, hung high
With Viking shields, pushed dauntless from the shore,
And down along the golden way vanished
Into the crimson West. Before,—unknown,
Interminable, mysterious, stretched the vast
Expanse of waters, and behind,
The night. But resolute, these rovers held their way
Unterrified by darkness or the din
Unknown. These men, who from their birth
With mystery had lived, felt now no fear,—
They were as brave in darkness as in light.
Tempestuous sea to them was dearer aye
Than peaceful shore. And thus their prow
They turned, alone, to pierce the hidden veil.
The last dim foreland faded in the night:
Nought was there but the rolling, melancholy waste
Of waters, one frail craft engulfed in infinite
Unknown, battling with illimitable mysteries.
Then as to make the secret way more weird
An unrelenting mist shut out the stars
From sight; and the grim ocean rovers were
Without a guide upon a trackless sea.
Yet on before a light did ever lead,
For eagle-eyed the pioneers descried
A steadfast gleam, farseen beyond the night's
Remotest bound, of the unfathomable
Gloom. They sailed a vast and shoreless sea,
Through night that brings no day, amid a wild
Expanse of pathless waters; but the hearts