

Reverse of Fortunes

Enoch ARDEN

by

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ENOCH ARDEN

Long lines of cliff breaking have left
a chasm;

And in the chasm are foam and
yellow sands;
Beyond, red roofs about a narrow
wharf

In cluter; then a moulder'd church;
and higher

A long street climbs to one tall-to-
wer'd mill;
And high in heaven behind it a gray
down

With Danish barrows; and a hazel-
wood,

By autumn nutters haunted, flourishes
Green in a cuplike hollow of the
down.

Here on this beach a hundred years
ago.

Three children of three houses,
Annie Lee,

The prettiest little damsel in the port,
And Philip Ray the miller's only son,
And Enoch Arden, a rough sailor's
lad

Made orphan by a winter shipwreck,
play'd

Among the waste and lumber of the
shore,

Hard coils of cordage, swarthy fishing-
nets,

Anchors of rusty fluke, and boats
updrawn;

And built their castles of dissolving
sand

To watch them overflow'd, or follow-
ing up

And flying the white breaker, daily
left

The little footprint daily wash'd
away.

A narrow cave ran in beneath the cliff;
In this the children play'd at keeping
house.

Enoch was host one day, Philip
the next,

While Annie still was mistress; but
at times

Enoch would hold possession for a
week:

'This is my house and this my little
wife.

'Mine too' said Philip 'turn and turn
about.'

When, if they quarrell'd, Enoch
strongermade

Was master: then would Philip, his
blue eyes

All flooded with the helpless wrath
of tears

Shriek out 'I hate you, Enoch,' and
at this

The little wife would weep for com-
pany,

And pray them not to quarrel for her
sake,

And say she would be little wife to
both.

But when the dawn of rosy child-
hood past,

And the new warmth of life's ascend-
ing sun

Was felt by either, fixt his heart
On that one girl; and Enoch spoke
his love,

But Philip loved in silence; and the
girl

Seem'd kinder unto Philip than to
him;

But she loved Enoch; tho' she knew
it not,

And would if ask'd deny it. Enoch set
A purpose evermore before his eyes,

To hoard all savings to the uttermost,
To purchase his own boat, and make a
home

For Annie: and so prosper'd that at
last

A luckier or a bolder fisherman,
A carefuller in peril, did not breathe

For leagues along that breaker-beaten
coast

Than Enoch. Likewise had he served a
year

On board a merchantman, and made
himself

Full sailor; and he thrice had pluck'd
a life

From the dread sweep of the down-
streaming seas:

And all men look'd upon him favour-
ably:

And ere he touch'd his one-and-
twentieth May

He purchased his own boat, and made
a home

For Annie, neat and nestlike, halfway
up

The narrow street that clamber'd
toward the mill.

Then, on a golden autumn eventide,
The younger people making holiday,

With bag and sack and basket, great
and small,

Went nutting to the hazels. Philip
stay'd

(his father lying sick and needing him)
An hour behind; but as he climb'd the
hill,

Just where the prone edge of the
wood began

To feather toward the hollow, saw
the pair,

Enoch and Annie, sitting hand-in-hand,
His large gray eyes and weather-
beaten face

All-kindled by a still and sacred fire,
That burn'd as on an altar. Philip
look'd,

And in their eyes and faces read his
doom;

Then, as their faces drew together,
groan'd,

And slipt aside, and like a wounded
life

Crept down into the hollows of the
wood;

There, while the rest were loud in
merry-making,

Had his dark hour unseen, and rose
and past

Bearing a lifelong hunger in his heart.

So these were wed, and merrily rang
the bells,

And merrily ran the years, seven
happy years,

Seven happy years of health and
competence,

And mutual love and honourable toil;
With children, first a daughter. In him
woke,

With his first babe's first cry, the noble
wish

To save all earnings to the uttermost,
And give his child a better bringing-up

Than his had been, or hers; a wish
renew'd,

When two years after came a boy to be
The rosy idol of her solitudes,

While Enoch was abroad on watchful
seas,

Or often journeying landward; for in
truth

Enoch's white horse, and Enoch's
ocean-spoil

In ocean-smelling oster, and his face,
Rough-riden'd with a thousand win-
ter gales.

Not only to the markets-cross were
known,

But in the leafy lanes behind the down,
Far as the portal-warding lion-whelp,

And peacock-yewtree of the lonely
Hall,

Whose Friday fare was Enoch's mis-
terring.

Then came a change, as all things
human change.

Ten miles to northward of the narrow
port

Open'd a larger haven: thither used
Enoch at times to go by land or sea;

And once when there, and clambering
on a mast

In harbour, by mischance he slipt and
fell:

A limb was broken when they lifted
him;

And while he lay recovering there, his
wife

Bore him another son, a sickly one:
 Another hand crept too across his
 trade
 Taking her bread and theirs: and on
 him fell,
 Altho' a grave and staid God-fearing
 man,
 Yet lying thus inactive, doubt and
 gloom.
 He seem'd, as in a nightmare of the
 night,
 To see his children leading evermore
 Low miserable lives of hand-to-mouth,
 And her, he loved, a beggar: then he
 pray'd
 'Save them from this, whatever comes
 to me.'
 And while he pray'd, the master of
 that ship
 Enoch had served in, hearing his
 mischance,
 Came, for he knew the man and
 valued him,
 Reporting of his vessel China-bound,
 And wanting yet a boatswain, Would
 he go?
 There yet were many weeks before
 she sail'd,
 Sail'd from this port. Would Enoch
 have the place?
 And Enoch all at once assented to it,
 Rejoicing at that answer to his prayer.
 So now that shadow of mischance
 appear'd
 No graver than as when some little
 cloud
 Cuts off the fiery highway of the sun,
 And isles a light in the offing; yet
 the wife—
 When he was gone—the children—what
 to do?
 Then Enoch lay long pondering on his
 plans;
 To sell the boat—and yet he loved her
 well—
 How many a rough sea had he
 weather'd in her!
 He knew her, as a horseman knows
 his horse—

And yet to sell her—then with what
 she brought
 Buy goods and stores—set Annie forth
 in trade
 With all that seamen needed or their
 wives—
 So might she keep the house while he
 was gone.
 Should he not trade himself out yon-
 der? go
 This voyage more than once? yea
 twice or thrice—
 As oft as needed—last, returning rich,
 Become the master of a larger craft,
 With fuller profits lead an easier life,
 Have all his pretty young ones edu-
 cated,
 And pass his days in peace among
 his own.
 Thus Enoch in his heart determined
 all:
 Then moving homeward came on
 Annie pale,
 Nursing the sickly babe, her latest-
 born.
 Forward she started with a happy cry,
 And laid the feeble infant in his arms;
 Whom Enoch took, and handled all
 his limbs,
 Appraised his weight and fondled
 fatherlike,
 But had no heart to break his purposes
 To Annie, till the morrow, when he
 spoke.
 Then first since Enoch's golden ring
 had girt
 Her finger, Annie fought against his
 will:
 Yet not with brawling opposition she,
 But manifold entreaties, many a tear,
 Many a sad kiss by day by night
 renew'd
 (Sure that all evil would come out of
 it)
 Besought him, supplicating, if he cared
 For her or his dear children, not to go.
 He not for his own self caring but her,

Her and her children, let her plead in
 vain;
 So grieving held his will, and bore it
 thro'.

For Enoch parted with his old sea-
 friend,
 Bought Annie goods and stores, and
 set his hand
 To fit their little streetward sitting-
 room
 With shelf and corner for the goods
 and stores.
 So all day long till Enoch's last at
 home,
 Shaking their pretty cabin, hammer
 and axe,
 Auger and saw, while Annie seem'd to
 hear
 Her own death-scaffold raising, shrill'd
 and rang.
 Till this was ended, and his careful
 hand,—
 The space was narrow,—having order'd
 all
 Almost as neat and close as Nature
 packs
 Her blossom or her seedling, paused;
 and he,
 Who needs would work for Annie to
 the last,
 Ascending tired, heavily slept till morn.

And Enoch faced this morning of
 farewell
 Brightly and boldly. All his Annie's
 fears,
 Save as his Annie's, were a laughter to
 him.
 Yet Enoch as a brave God-fearing man
 Bow'd himself down, and in that
 mystery
 Where God-in-man is one with man-in-
 God,
 Pray'd for a blessing on his wife and
 babes
 Whatever came to him: and then he
 said
 'Annie, this voyage by the grace of
 God

Will bring fair weather yet to all of us.
 Keep a clean hearth and a clear fire
 for me,
 For I'll be back, my girl, before you
 know it.
 Then lightly rocking baby's cradle
 'and he,
 This pretty, puny, weakly little one,—
 Nay—for I love him all the better for
 it—
 God bless him, he shall sit upon my
 knees
 And I will tell him tales of foreign
 parts,
 And make him merry, when I come
 home again.
 Come, Annie, come, cheer up before
 I go.
 Him running on thus hopefully she
 heard,
 And almost hoped herself; but when
 he turn'd
 The current of his talk to graver things
 In sailor fashion roughly sermonizing
 On providence and trust in Heaven,
 she heard,
 Heard and not heard him; as the villa-
 ge girl,
 Who sets her pitcher underneath the
 spring,
 Musing on him that used to fill it for
 her,
 Hears and not hears, and lets it over-
 flow.
 At length she spoke 'O Enoch, you are
 wise;
 And yet for all your wisdom well
 know I,
 That I shall look upon your face no
 more.
 "Well then," said Enoch, "I shall look
 on yours.
 Annie, the ship I sail in passes here
 (He named the day) get you a seaman's
 glass,
 Spy out my face, and laugh at all your
 fears.'
 But when the last of those last mo-
 ments came,

'Annie, my girl, cheer up, be comforted,
 Look to the babes, and till I come again
 Keep everything shipshape, for I must go.
 And fear no more for me; or if you fear
 Cast all your cares on God; that anchor holds.
 Is He not yonder in those uttermost
 Parts of the morning? if I flee to these
 Can I go from Him? and the sea is His,
 The sea is His: He made it.'

Enoch rose,

Cast his strong arms about his drooping wife,
 And kiss'd his wonder-stricken little ones;
 But for the third, the sickly one, who slept
 After a night of feverous wakefulness,
 When Annie would have raised him
 Enoch said
 'Wake him not' let him sleep; how should the child
 Remember this? and kiss'd him in his cot.
 But Annie from her baby's forehead
 clipt
 A tiny curl, and gave it: this he kept
 Thro' all his future; but now hastily caught
 His bundle, waved his hand, and went his way.

She when the day, that Enoch mention'd came,
 Borrow'd a glass, but all in vain:
 perhaps
 She could not fix the glass to suit her eye;
 Perhaps her eye was dim, hand tremulous;
 She saw him not: and while he stood on deck
 Waving, the moment and the vessel past.

Ev'n to the last dip of the vanishing sail
 She watch'd it, and departed weeping for him;
 Then, tho' she mourn'd his absence as his grave,
 Set her sad will no less to chime with his,
 But thro' not in her trade, not being bred
 To barter, nor compensating the want
 By shrewdness, neither capable of lies,
 Nor asking overmuch and taking less,
 And still foreboding 'what would Enoch say?'

For more than once, in days of difficulty
 And pressure, had she sold her wares for less
 Than what she gave in buying what she sold;
 She fail'd and sadden'd knowing it; and thus,
 Expectant of that news which never came,
 Gain'd for her own a scanty sustenance,
 And lived a life of silent melancholy.

Now the third child was sickly-born and grew
 Yet sicker, tho' the mother cared for it
 With all a mother's care; nevertheless,
 Whether her business often call'd her from it,
 Or thro' the want of what it needed most,
 Or means to pay the voice who best could tell
 What most it needed—howsoever it was,
 After a lingering,—ere she was aware,—
 Like the caged bird escaping suddenly,
 The little innocent soul flitted away.

In that same week when Annie buried it,
 Philip's true heart, which hunger'd for her peace
 (Since Enoch left he had not look'd upon her),

Smote him, as having kept aloof so long.
 'Surely,' said Philip, 'I may see her now.
 May be some little comfort,' therefore went,
 Past thro' the solitary room in front,
 Paused for a moment at an inner door,
 Then struck it thrice, and, no one opening,
 Enter'd; but Annie, seated with her grief,
 Fresh from the burial of her little one,
 Cared not to look on any human face,
 But turn'd her own toward the wall and wept.

Then Philip standing up said falteringly
 'Annie, I came to ask a favour of you.'

He spoke; the passion in her moan'd reply
 'Favour from one so sad and so forlorn
 As I am!' half abash'd him; yet unask'd,
 His bashfulness and tenderness at war,
 He set himself beside her, saying to her:

'I came to speak to you of what he wish'd,
 Enoch, your husband: I have ever said
 You chose the best among us—a strong man:

For where he fixt his heart he set his hand
 To do the thing he will'd, and bore it thro'.
 And wherefore did he go this weary way,
 And leave you lonely? not to see the world—
 For pleasure?—nay, but for the where-withal
 To give his babes a better bringing-up
 Than his had been, or yours: that was his wish.
 And if he come again, vest will he be
 To find the precious morning hours were lost.

And it would vex him even in his grave,
 If he could know his babes were running wild
 Like colts about the waste. So, Annie,
 now—
 Have we not known each other all our lives?
 I do beseech you by the love you bear
 Him and his children not to say me nay—
 For, if you will, when Enoch comes again
 Why then he shall repay me—if you will,
 Annie—for I am rich and well-to-do.
 Now let me put the boy and girl to school:
 This is the favour that I came to ask.'

Then Annie with her brows against the wall
 Answer'd I cannot look you in the face,
 I seem so foolish and so broken down.
 When you came in my sorrow broke me down;
 And now I think your kindness breaks me down;
 But Enoch lives; that is borne in on me:
 He will repay you: money can be repaid;
 Not kindness such as yours.'

And Philip ask'd
 'Then you will let me, Annie?'

There she turn'd,
 She rose, and fixt her swimming eyes upon him,
 And dwelt a moment on his kindly face,
 Then calling down a blessing on his head
 Caught at his hand, and wrung it passionately,
 And past into the little garth beyond.
 So lifted up in spirit he moved away.
 Then Philip put the boy and girl to school,

And bought them needful books, and
every way,
Like one who does his duty by his own,
Made himself theirs; and tho' for
Annie's sake,
Fearing the lazy fossip of the port,
He oft denied his heart his dearest
wish
And seldom cross her threshold, yet he
sent
Gifts by the children, garden-herbs and
fruit,
The late and early roses from his wall,
Or cones from the down, and now
and then,
With some pretext of fineness in the
meal
To save the offence of charitable, flour
From his tall mill that whistled on the
waste.

But Philip did not fathom Annie's
mind:

Scare could the woman when he came
upon her,
Out of full heart and bundless grati-
tude
Light on a broken word to thank him
with.

But Philip was her children's all-in-all;
From distant corners of the street they
ran
To greet his hearty welcome heartily;
Lords of his house and of his mill
were they;
Worried his passive ear with petty
wrongs

Or pleasures, hung upon him, play'd
with him
And call'd him Father Philip. Philip
gain'd
As Enoch lost; for Enoch seem'd to
them
Uncertain as a vision or a dream,
Faint as a figure seen in early dawn,
Down at the far end of an avenue,
Going we know not where: and so ten
years,
Since Enoch left his hearth and native
land,

Fled forward, and no news of Enoch
came.

It chanced one evening Annie's children
long'd
To go with others, nutting to the
wood,
And Annie would go with them;
then they begg'd

For Father Philip (as they call'd him)
too:
Him, like the working bee in blos-
som-dust,
Blanch'd with his mill, they found;
and saying to him
'Come with us Father Philip' he denied;
But when the children pluck'd at him
to go,
He laugh'd, and yielded readily to
their wish,
For was not Annie with them? and
they went.

But after scaling half the weary down,
Just where the prone edge of the
wood began
To feather toward the hollow, all her
force
Fail'd her; and sighing, 'Let me rest'
she said:

So Philip rested with he well-content;
While all the younger ones with jubi-
lant cries
Broke from their elders, and tumul-
tuously
Down thro' the whitening hazels made
a plunge
To the bottom, and dispersed, and
bent or broke
The lithe reluctant boughs to tear
away
Their tawny clusters, crying to each
other
And calling, here and there, about the
wood.

But Philip sitting at her side forgot
Her presence, and remember'd one
dark hour

Here in this wood, when like a wound-
ed life

He crept into the shadow: at last he
said,

Lifting his honest forehead, 'Listen,
Annie,

How merry they are down yonder
in the wood.

Tired, Annie?' for she did not speak a
word.

'Tired?' but her face had fall'n upon
her hands;

At which, as with a kind of anger in
him,

'The ship was lost,' he said, 'the ship
was lost!

No more of that! why should you kill
yourself

And make them orphans quite?' And
Annie said

'I thought not of it: but—I know not
why—

Their voices make me feel so solitary.'

Then Philip coming somewhat closer
spoke.

'Annie, there is a thing upon my mind,
And it has been upon my mind so long,

That tho' I know not when it first
came there,

I know that it will out at last. O
Annie,

It is beyond all hope, against all
chance,

That he who left you ten long years
ago

Should still be living; well then—let
me speak:

I grieve to see you poor and wanting
help:

I cannot help you as I wish to do
Unless—they say that women are so
quick—

Perhaps you know what I would have
you know—

I wish you for my wife. I fain would
prove

A father to your children: I do think
They love me as a father: I am sure

That I love them as if they were mine
own;

And I believe, if you fast my wife,
That after all these sad uncertain years,
We might be still as happy as God
grants

To any of his creatures. Think upon it:
For I am well-to-do—no kin no care,
No burthen save my care for you
and yours:

And we have known each other all
our lives,
And I have loved you longer than you
know.'

Then answer'd Annie; tenderly she
spoke:

'You have been as God's good angel in
our house.

God bless you for it, God reward you
for it,

Philip, with something happier than
myself.

Can one love twice? can you be ever
loved

As Enoch was? what is it that you
ask?

'I am content' he answer'd 'to be loved
A little after Enoch.' 'O' she cried,
Scared as it were, 'dear Philip, wait a
while:

If Enoch comes—but Enoch will not
come—

Yet wait a year, a year is not so long:
Surely I shall be wiser in a year:

O wait a little! Philip sadly said
'Annie, as I have waited all my life
I well may wait a little.' 'Nay' she
cried

'I am bound: you have my promise—in
a year:

Will you not bide your year as I bide
mine?'

And Philip answer'd 'I will bide my
year.'

Here both were mute, till Philip
glancing up

Beheld the dead flame of the fallen
day

Pass from the Danish barrow overhead;
Then fearing night and chill for Annie,
rose
And sent his voice beneath him thro'
the wood.

Up came the children laden with
their spoil;
Then all descended to the port, and
there
At Annie's door he paused and gave
his hand,
Saying gently 'Annie, when I spoke
to you,
That was your hour of weakness. I
was wrong,
I am always bound to you, but you
are free.'
Then Annie weeping answer'd 'I am
bound.'

She spoke; and in one moment as it
were,
While yet she went about her house-
hold ways,
Ev'n as she dwelt upon his latest words,
That he had loved her longer than she
knew,
That autumn into autumn flash'd
again,
And there he stood once more before
her face,
Claiming her promise. 'Is it a year?'
she ask'd.

'Yes, if the nuts' he said 'be ripe again;
Come out and see.' But she—she put
him off—
So much to look to—such a change—a
month—
Give her a month—she knew that she
was bound—
A month—no more. Then Philip with
his eyes
Fell of that lifelong hunger, and his
voice
Shaking a little like a drunkard's hand,
'Take your own time, Annie, take
your own time.'
And Annie could have wept for pity
of him;

And yet she held him on delayingly
With many a scarce-believable excuse,
Trying his truth and his long-suffe-
rance,
Till half-another year had slipt away.

By this the lazy gossips of the port,
Abhorrent of a calculation crost,
Began to chafe as at a personal wrong.
Some thought that Philip did but trifle
with her;
Some that she but held off to draw
him on;
And others laugh'd at her and Philip
too,
As simple folk that knew not their
own minds,
And one, in whom all evil fancies clung
Like serpent eggs together, laughingly
Would hint at worse in either. Her own
son
Was silent, tho' he often look'd his
wish;
But evermore the daughter prest upon
her
To wed the man so dear to all of them
And lift the household out of poverty;
And Philip's rosy face contracting grew
Careworn and wan; and all these things
fell on her
Sharp as reproach.

At last one night it chanced
That Annie could not sleep, but
earnestly
Pray'd for a sign 'my Enoch is he gone?'
The compass'd round by the blind
wall of night
Brook'd not the expectant terror of
her heart,
Started from bed, and struck herself
a light,
Then desperately seized the holy Book,
Suddenly set it wide to find a sign,
Suddenly put her finger on the text,
'Under the palm-tree.' That was
nothing to her:
No meaning there: she closed the Book
and slept:

When lo! her Enoch sitting on a
height,
Under a palm-tree, over him the Sun:
'He is gone,' she thought, 'he is happy,
he is singing
Hosanna in the highest: yonder shines
The Sun of Righteousness, and these
be palms
Whereof the happy people strowing
cried
"Hosanna in the highest!" Here she
woke,
Resolved, sent for him and said
wildly to him
'There is no reason why we should not
wed.'
'Then for God's sake,' he answer'd,
'both our sakes,
So you will wed me, let it be at once.'

So these were wed and merrily rang
the bells,
Merily rang the bells and they were
wed.
But never merrily beat Annie's heart.
A footstep seem'd to fall beside her
path,
She knew not whence; a whisper on
her ear,
She knew not what; nor loved she to
be left
Alone at home, nor ventured out alone.
What ail'd her then, that ere she
enter'd, often
Her hand dwelt lingeringly on the
latch,
Fearing to enter: Philip thought he
knew:
Such doubts and fears were common
to her state,

Being with child: but when her child
was born,
Then her new child was as herself
renew'd,

Then the new mother came about her
heart,
Then her good Philip was her all-in-all,

And that mysterious instinct wholly
died.

And where was Enoch? prosperously
sail'd
The ship 'Good Fortune,' tho' at
setting forth
The Biscay, roughly ridging eastward,
shook
And almost overwhelm'd her, yet
unvext
She slipt across the summer of the
world,
Then after a long tumble about the
Cape
And frequent interchange of foul and
fair,
She passing thro' the summer world
again,
The breath of heaven came conti-
nually
And sent her sweetly by the golden
isles,
Till silent in her oriental haven.

There Enoch traded for himself, and
bought
Quaint monsters for the market of
those times,
A gilded dragon, also, for the babes.
Less lucky her home-voyage: at first
indeed
Thro' many a fair sea-circle, day by
day,
Scarce-rocking, her full-busted figure-
head
Stared o'er the ripple feathering from
her bows:
Then follow'd calms, and then winds
variable,
Then baffling, a long course of them;
and last
Storm, such as drove her under moon-
less heavens
Till hard upon the cry of 'breakers'
came
The crash of ruin, and the loss of all
But Enoch and two others. Half the
night,

Buoy'd upon floating tackle and broken spars,
These drifted, stranding on an isle at moon
Rich, but the loneliest in a lonely sea.

No want was there of human sustenance,
Soft fruitage, mighty nuts, and nourishing roots;
Nor save for pity was it hard to take
The helpless life so wild that it was tame.
There in a seaward-gazing mountain-gorge

They built, and thatch'd with leaves of palm, a hut,
Half hut, half native cavern. So the three,
Set in this Eden of all plenteousness,
Dwelt with eternal summer, ill-content.

For one, the youngest, hardly more than boy,
Hurt in that night of sudden ruin and wreck,
Lay lingering out a five-years' death-in-life.
They could not leave him. After he was gone,
The two remaining found a fallen stem;
And Enoch's comrade, careless of himself,
Fire-hollowing this in Indian fashion, fell
Sun-stricken, and that other lived alone.
In those two deaths he read God's warning 'wait.'

The mountain wooded to the peak, the lawns
And winding glades high up like ways to Heaven,
The slender coco's drooping crown of plumes,
The lightning flash of insect and of bird,

The lustre of the long convolvuluses
That coil'd around the stately stems,
and ran
Ev'n to the limit of the land, the glories
And glories of the broad belt of the world,

All these he saw; but what he fain had seen
He could not see, the kindly human face,
Nor ever hear a kindly voice, but heard
The myriad shriek of wheeling ocean-fowl,
The league-long roller thundering on the reef,
The moving whisper of huge trees that branch'd
And blossom'd in the zenith, or the sweep
Of some precipitous rivulet to the wave,

As down the shore he ranged, or all day long
Sat often in the seaward-gazing gorge,
A shipwreck'd sailor, waiting for a sail:
No sail from day to day, but every day
The sunrise broken into scarlet shafts
Among the palms and ferns and precipices;
The blaze upon the waters to the east;

The blaze upon his island overhead;
The blaze upon the waters to the west;
Then the great stars that globed themselves in Heaven,
The hollower-bellowing ocean, and again
The scarlet shafts of sunrise—but no sail.

There often as he watch'd or seem'd to watch,
So still, the golden lizard on him paused,
A phantom made of many phantoms moved
Before him haunting him, or he himself

Moved haunting people, things and places, known
Far in a darker isle beyond the line;
The babes, their babble, Annie, the small house,
The climbing street the mill, the leafy lanes,
The peacock-yewtree and the lonely Hall,
The horse he drove, the boat he sold, the chill
November dawns and dewy-glooming downs,
The gentle shower, the smell of dying leaves,
And the low moan of leaden-colour'd seas.

Once likewise, in the ringing of his ears,
Tho' faintly, merrily—far and far away—
He heard the pealing of his parish bells;
Then, tho' he knew not wherefore, started up
Shuddering, and when the beauteous hateful isle
Return'd upon him, had not his poor heart
Spoken with that, which being everywhere
Lets none, who speaks with Him, seem all alone,
Surely the man had died of solitude.

Thus over Enoch's early-silvering head
The sunny and rainy seasons came and went
Year after year. His hopes to see his own,
And pace the sacred old familiar fields,
Not yet had perish'd, when his lonely doom
Came suddenly to an end. Another ship
(She wanted water) blown by baffling winds,
Like the 'Good Fortune', from her destined course,
Stay'd this isle, not knowing where she lay:

For since the mate had seen at early dawn
Across a break on the mist-wreathen isle
The silent water slipping from the hills,
They sent a crew that landing burst away
In search of stream or fount, and fill'd the shores
With clamour. Downward from his mountain gorge
Stept the long-hair'd long-bearded solitary,
Brown, looking hardly human, strangely clad,
Muttering and mumbling, idiotlike it seem'd,
With inarticulate rage, and making signs
They knew not what: and yet he led the way
To where the rivulets of sweet water ran;
And ever as he mingled with the crew,
And heard them talking, his long-bounden tongue
Was loosen'd, till he made them understand;
Whom, when their casks were fill'd, they took aboard:
And there the tale he utter'd brokenly,
Scare-credited at first but more and more,
Amazed and melted all who listen'd to it:
And clothes they gave him and free passage home;
But oft he work'd among the rest and shook
His isolation from him. None of these
Came from his country, or could answer him,
If question'd, aught of what he cared to know.
And dull the voyage was with long delays,
The vessel scarce sea-worthy; but evermore

His fancy fled before the lazy wind
 Returning, till beneath a clouded
 moon
 He like a lover down thro' all his blood
 Drew in the dewy meadowy morning-
 breath
 Of England, blown across her ghostly
 wall:
 And that same morning officers and
 men
 Levied a kindly tax upon themselves,
 Pitying the lonely man, and gave him
 it:
 Then moving up the coast they landed
 him,
 Ev'n in that harbour whence he sail'd
 before.

There Enoch spoke no word to any
 one,
 But homeward—home—what home?
 had be a home?
 His home, he walk'd. Bright was that
 afternoon,
 Sunny but chill; till drawn thro' either
 chasm,
 Where either haven open'd on the
 deeps,
 Roll'd a sea-haze and whelm'd the
 world in gray;
 Cut off the length of highway on
 before,
 And left but narrow breadth to left
 and right
 Of wither'd holt or tilth or pasturage.
 On the nigh-naked tree the robin
 piped
 Disconsolate, and thro' the dripping
 haze
 The dead weight of the dead leaf bore
 it down:
 Thicker the drizzle grew, deeper the
 gloom;
 Last, as it seem'd, a great mist-blotted
 light
 Flared on him, and he came upon the
 place.

Then down the long street having
 slowly stolen,

His heart foreshadowing all calamity,
 His eyes upon the stones, he reach'd
 the home
 Where Annie lived and loved him, and
 his babes
 In those far-off seven happy years
 were born;
 But finding neither light nor murmur
 there
 (A bill of sale gleam'd thro, the drizzle)
 crept
 Still downward thinking 'dead or dead
 to me!'

Down to the pool and narrow wharf
 he went,
 Seeking a tavern which of old he knew,
 A front of timber-crost antiquity,
 So propt, worm-eaten, ruinously old,
 He thought it must have gone; but he
 was gone
 Who kept it; and his widow Miriam
 Lane,
 With daily-dwindling profits held the
 house;
 A haunt of brawling seamen once, but
 now
 Still, with yet a bed for wandering
 men.
 There Enoch rested silent many days.
 But Miriam Lane was good and garru-
 lous,
 Nor let him be, but often breaking in,
 Told him, with other annals of the
 port,
 Not knowing—Enoch was so brown, so
 bow'd,
 So broken—all the story of his house.
 His baby's death, her growing poverty,
 How philip put her little ones to
 school,
 And kept them in it, his long wooing
 her,
 Her slow consent, and marriage, and
 the birth
 Of Philip's child; and o'er his counte-
 nance
 No shadow past, nor motion; any one,
 Regarding, well had deem'd he felt the
 tale

Less than the teller: only when she
 closed
 'Enoch, poor man, was cast away and
 lost'
 He, shaking his gray head pathetically,
 Repeated muttering 'cast away and
 lost!'
 Again in deeper inward whispers 'lost!'

But Enoch yearn'd to see her face
 again;
 'If I might look on her sweet face again
 And know that she is happy. So the
 thought
 Haunted and harass'd him, and drove
 him forth,
 At evening when the dull November
 day
 Was growing duller twilight, to the hill.
 There he sat down gazing on all below;
 There did a thousand memories roll
 upon him,
 Unspeakable for sadness. By and by
 The ruddy square of comfortable light,
 Far-blazing from the rear of Philip's
 house,
 Allured him, as the beacon-blaze allures
 The bird of passage, till he madly
 strikes
 Against it, and beats out his weary life.

For Philip's dwelling fronted on the
 street,
 The latest house to landward; but
 behind,
 With one small gate that open'd on the
 waste,
 Flourish'd a little garden square and
 wall'd:

And in it throve an ancient evergreen,
 A yewtree, and all round it ran a walk
 Of shingle, and a walk divided it:
 But Enoch shunn'd the middle walk
 and stole
 Up by the wall, behind the yew; and
 thence
 That which he better might have
 shunn'd, if griefs

Like his have worse or better, Enoch
 saw.

For cups and silver on the burnish'd
 board
 Sparkled and shone; so genial was the
 hearth:
 And on the right hand of the hearth he
 saw
 Philip, the slighted suitor of old times,
 Stout, rosy, with his babe across his
 knees;
 And o'er her second father stoop'd a
 girl,
 A later but a loftier Annie Lee,
 Fair-hair'd and tall, and from her
 lifted hand
 Dangled a length of ribbon and a ring
 To tempt the babe, who rear'd his
 creasy arms,
 Caught at and ever miss'd it, and they
 laugh'd;
 And on the left hand of the hearth he
 saw
 The mother glancing often toward her
 babe,
 But turning now and then to speak
 with him,
 Her son, who stood beside her tall and
 strong,
 And saying that which pleased him,
 for he smiled.

Now when the dead man come to life
 beheld
 His wife his wife no more, and saw the
 babe
 Hers, yet not his, upon the father's
 knee,
 And all the warmth, the peace, the
 happiness.
 And his own children tall and beautiful,
 And him, that other, reigning in his
 place,
 Lord of his rights and of his children's
 love,—
 Then he, tho' Miriam Lane had told
 him all,

Because things seen are mightier than things heard,
Stagger'd and shook, holding the branch, and fear'd
To send abroad a shrill and terrible cry,
Which in one moment, like the blast of doom,
Would shatter all the happiness of the hearth.

He therefore turning softly like a thief,
Lest the harsh shingle should grate underfoot,

And feeling all along the garden-wall,
Lest he should swoon and tumble and be found,
Crept to the gate, and open'd it, and closed,

As lightly as a sick man's chamber-door,
Behind him, and came out upon the waste

And there he would have knelt, but that his knees
Were feeble, so that falling prone he dug
His fingers into wet earth, and pray'd.

'Too hard to bear! why did they take me thence?
O God Almighty, blessed Saviour, Thou

That didst uphold me on my lonely isle,
Uphold me, Father, in my loneliness
A little longer! aid me, give me strength
Not to tell her, never to let her know.
Help me not to break in upon her peace.

My children too! must I not speak to these?
They know me not. I should betray myself.

Never! No father's kiss for me—the girl
So like her mother, and the boy, my son.'

These speech and thought and nature fall'd a little,

And he lay tranced; but when he rose and paced
Back toward his solitary home again,
All down the long and narrow street he went
Beating it in upon his weary brain,
As tho' it were the burthen of a song,
'Not to ell her, never to let her know.'

He was not all unhappy. His resolve
Uphore him, and firm faith, and evermore
Prayer from a living source within the will,
And beating up thro' all the bitter world,

Like fountains of sweet water in the sea,
Kept him a living soul. 'This miller's wife'
He said to Miriam 'that you spoke about,
Has she no fear that her first husband lives?'

'Ay, ay, poor soul' said Miriam, 'Fear enow!
If you could tell her you had seen him dead,

Why, that would be her comfort; and he thought
'After the Lord has call'd me she shall know,

I wait His time,' and Enoch set himself,
Scorning an alms, to work whereby to live,
Almost to all things could he turn his hand.

Cooper he was and carpenter, and wrought
To make the boatmen fishing-nets, or help'd

At lading and unlading the tall barks,
That brought the stunted commerce of those days;

Thus earn'd a scanty living for himself:
Yet since he did but labour for himself,

Work without hope, there was not life in it

Whereby the man could live; and as the year
Roll'd itself round again to meet the day

When Enoch had return'd, a languor came

Upon him, gentle sickness, gradually
Weakening the man, till he could do no more,
But kept the house, his chair, and last his bed.

And Enoch bore his weakness cheerfully,
For sure no gladlier does the stranded wreck
See thro' the gray skirts of a lifting small

The boat that bears the hope of life approach
To save the life despair'd of, than he saw
Death dawning on him, and the close of all.

For thro' that dawning gleam'd a kindlier hope
On Enoch thinking 'after I am gone,
Then may she learn I lov'd her to the last.'

He call'd aloud for Mariam Lane and said

'Woman, I have a secret—only swear,
Before I tell you—swear upon the book
Not to reveal it, till you see me dead.'
'Dead,' clamour'd the good woman,
'hear him talk!

I warrant, man, that we shall bring you round.'

'Swear' added Enoch sternly 'on the book.'

And on the book, half-frighted,
Miriam swore.
Then Enoch rolling his gray eyes upon her,

'Did you know Enoch Arden of this town?'
'Know him?' she said 'I knew him far away.

Ay, ay, I mind him coming down the street;

Held his head high, and cared for no man, he.'
Slowly and sadly Enoch answer'd her;
'His head is low, and no man cares for him.'

I think I have not three days more to live;
I am the man.' At which the woman gave

A half-incredulous, half-hysterical cry.
'You Arden, you! nay,—sure he was a foot
Higher than you be.' Enoch said again
'My God has bow'd me down to what I am;

My grief and solitude have broken me;
Nevertheless, know you that I am he
Who married—but that name has twice been changed—

I married her who married Philip Ray.
Sit, listen.' Then he told her of his voyage,
His wreck, his lonely life, his coming back,

His gazing in on Annie, his resolve,
And how he kept it. As the woman heard,
Fast flow'd the current of her easy tears,

While in her heart she yearn'd incessantly
To rush abroad all round the little haven,
Proclaiming Enoch Arden and his woes;

But awed and promise-bounden the forbore,
Saying only 'See your hairs before you go!

Eh, let me fetch 'em, Arden,' and arose
Eager to bring them down, for Enoch hung
A moment on her words, but then replied:

'Woman, disturb me not now at the last,
But let me hold my purpose till I die.
Sit down again; mark me and understand,

While I have power to speak, I charge
 you now,
 When you shall see her, tell her that I
 died
 Blessing her, praying for her, loving
 her;
 Save for the bar between us, loving
 her
 As when she laid her head beside my
 own.
 And tell my daughter Annic, whom I
 saw
 So like her mother, that my latest
 breath
 Was spent in blessing her and praying
 for her.
 And tell my son that I died blessing
 him.
 And say to Philip that I blest him too;
 He never meant us any thing but good.
 But if my children care to see me dead,
 Who hardly knew me living, let them
 come,
 I am their father; but she must not
 come,
 For my dead face would vex her after-
 life.
 And now there is but one of all my
 blood
 Who will embrace me in the world-to-
 be:
 This hair is his: she cut it off and gave
 it,
 And I have borne it with me all these
 years.

And thought to bear it with me to my
 grave;
 But now my mind is changed, for I
 shall see him,
 My babe in bliss: wherefore when I
 am gone,
 Take, give her this, for it may comfort
 her:
 It will moreover be a token to her,
 That I am he.'

He ceased; and Miriam Lane
 Made such a voluble answer promising
 all,
 That once again he roll'd his eyes
 upon her
 Repeating all he wish'd, and once
 again
 She promised.

Then the third night after this,
 While Enoch slumber'd motionless and
 pale,
 And Miriam watch'd and dozed at
 intervals,
 There came so loud a calling of the sea,
 That all the houses in the haven rang.
 He woke, he rose, he spread his arms
 abroad
 Crying with a loud voice 'A sail! a sail!
 I am saved;' and so fell back and spoke
 no more.

So past the strong heroic soul away,
 And when they buried him the little
 port
 Had seldom seen a costlier funeral

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