

New Mexico Quarterly

Volume 16 | Issue 1

Article 18

1946

Reflections of the Sea

Lincoln Fitzell

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/nmq>

Recommended Citation

Fitzell, Lincoln. "Reflections of the Sea." *New Mexico Quarterly* 16, 1 (1946). <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/nmq/vol16/iss1/18>

This Contents is brought to you for free and open access by the University of New Mexico Press at UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in *New Mexico Quarterly* by an authorized editor of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact disc@unm.edu.

THREE PORTRAITS AND A REFRAIN

REFLECTIONS OF THE SEA

Portraits in Verse

The Hero

By art's immortal privilege,
 We take a road that leads to town,
 And see old Buxton at his hedge,
 As morning brightens like renown.

He snips at green and lets it fall,
 Nothing between him and the sea
 But roses and a stony wall,
 And the garden worm—mortality.

Nothing defends him from the rock
 The cold wave wrecks its wrath upon,
 But grass to keep, and shears to mock
 The tendril pity of the dawn.

He lifts his knife into the vine,
 To cut the choke thorn of the grave,
 Nothing between him and the brine
 But salty wreaths of Spring to save.

The Champion

Once, fighting in the windy street,
 We heard the naked ocean roar,
 Felt blood as blind fiercely repeat
 Wild nature's anger at the door.

Now Stephen Varner lies at length
 A pace from summer where we dwell,
 And fists no longer test his strength,
 But sleep and flowers of farewell.

Once challenged in the mirror's mist
We spun the coin of salty days,
Drank joy to briny girls we kissed,
And saw eternal beacons blaze.

Now Stephen Varner's plain estate
Of simple warmth and rough esteem,
Like sand beneath the planet gate
Troubles the distance with no dream.

So near the strong man's battered heart
Retains its kindness in the air,
That leaves will glint, when friends depart,
Like sea salt on the bitter stair.

The Victor

With sweaty face and common sleeve,
We reap the rocky countryside,
And flower-knotted garlands leave
To Time that towers in the tide.

Thus Reuben Blake fought back the wiles
Of nature branching in lost trees,
Sowed burly bloom and plodded miles
To market past his clover bees.

Yet vastly hurried as the sea
That flung in spray to pasture air,
A wind beat wild with mystery
The salty lantern of his care.

Once leaning deeply on his spade,
In garden fragrance turned by hand,
He watched a horseman like a shade,
Whirl upward from the ocean sand.

Harsh reaper and tough sower stood
Then locked in frosty morning breath,
But Reuben knew a strength so good
Its grip reined back the stranger, Death.

This touch of blossom that we breathe,
 Is dust in which we all are dyed,
 This columned hour that we wreath
 Still Time's old tower in the tide.

REFRAIN

What is this mired pit of flesh,
 These knots that tighten in the mesh,
 This blood so hot and piteous
 That troubles us, that troubles us.

What is this wildroot joy of bane,
 This drink of thorn, this freshet stain,
 This bush of burning where we kneel—
 The bliss we feel, the bliss we feel.

We swing our hands in merry dance,
 Who fall and fade from glance to glance;
 The breather in the briar knows
 How fares the rose, how fares the rose.

The bower cannot lift nor screen
 Steep loneliness that haunts the green;
 By silence soon we're overgrown,
 And walk alone, and walk alone.

I heard within a thicket thinned,
 Sound of the world lost in the wind,
 That snowed its bloom in bramble trace,
 Love's trysting place, love's trysting place.

A petalled arbor of the ground,
 Along a thorny path I found
 Where seasons wrought a shady spell,
 And roses fell, and roses fell.

L I N C O L N F I T Z E L L