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Penobscot Poems

Arthur Barnard Price

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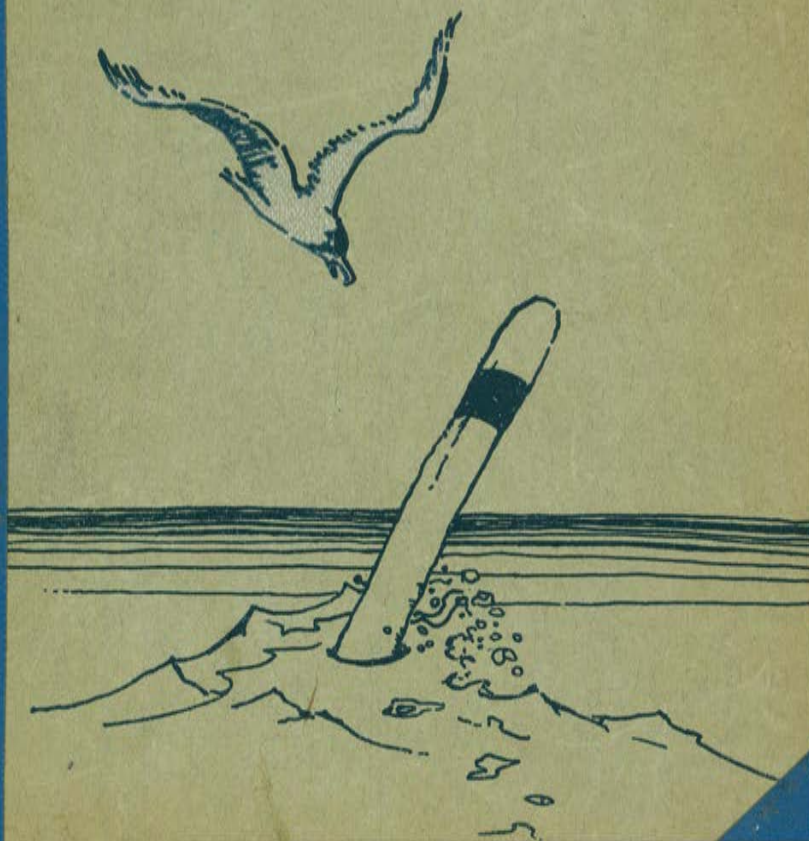
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PENOBSCOT POEMS

BY A. B. PRICE



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PENOBSCOT POEMS

EGGEMOGGIN REACH

When at first you travel there
You'll not know it for the Reach—
All the region seems as fair,
Rocks and firs and shingle beach—
As the steamer makes the landings you will fall
in love with each.

When you know it more and more
You will watch with joy to see
All the landmarks on the shore
Held in fondest memory—
From the Pumpkin Island Lighthouse till the
ocean opens free.

Like a lordly mountain lake,
Hemmed by rugged hills, and green—
Wooded shores without a break
Where the gulls their feathers preen—
Lies this far-flung reach of water, locked by
land, safe and serene!

How it grips you to the heart
Just to take a sweeping gaze
From the Western Bay, its start,
Down the Reach's rocky maze
Till at last your farthest vision meets Swans
Island's purple haze!

Would you know Eggemoggin Reach?
You must know its towns, and see
Every wooded cove and beach,
Every pasture, lane, and lea,
And its cozy homes on hillsides like the homes
of Arcady.

One old town I call to mind—
Brooklin, high upon a hill;
Mount Desert all blue behind,
Reach before, all calm and still—

The peaceful beauty of the scene gives one a
quiet thrill.

And with what serene delight
Do I hear the Brooklin bells
When the Sunday wind is right,
And their cadence falls and swells—

Lin-lum, lin-lum, across the Reach, their music
falls and swells!

Yachts and steamers, pleasure bound,
Heavy coasters, sailing slow,
Fishing boats that range around
From Castine to Isle au Haut

Know Eggemoggin Reach as haven in a strong
southwester blow.

And where lies a better berth
When the stormy winds prevail?
Where on all this troubled earth
Can you better take in sail

And heave your anchor overboard and snugly
ride the gale?

DEER ISLE

O Shore, O Happy Shore!

'Tis there I watch the fish-hawks as they soar;
Roam as I will each wooded, rocky cove,
The mazy paths the island cattle rove;
There, evermore,
I hear the lapping waters whisper me
Strange tales about the deep, mysterious sea.

The dreams, the peaceful dreams!

As lying 'neath the pines I catch the gleams
Of distant ships—the sunlight on their sails,
Their hulls far heeling to the summer gales;
Often it seems
I watch new argosies on trackless miles
Still searching for the far Hesperian Isles.

The years, the changing years!

They bring new joys, new sorrows, hopes and
fears;
Unchanged by time, my wish still is to be
Upon the well-loved strand beside the sea
Time more endears.
Flees then content, (as it has flown before)
Until I greet again the Happy Shore!

ASAILING THE WATERS OF JERICHO BAY

I remember the day,
Up in Jericho Bay,
That we went out afishing, and started away
In the still of the night,
With the moon shining bright,
With the water like glass—not a ripple in sight.

In our drift down the Reach
Not a point, not a beach
Gave a sound in the stillness, except for the
screech
Of an owl—yes, the croak
Of a blue heron broke
On the silence—and then, with a stir, day awoke!

When the sun barred the east
And the pink light increased,
Here a sail, there a sail showed its form; to dawn's
feast
(Which the tide flats disclose)
Flocked the medricks and crows,
Flocked the gulls, snipe, and fish-hawks—then lo,
the sun rose!

With the sun came the breeze
That we longed for; the trees
On the islands we passed dwindled into a frieze;
On the port tack we lay,
Shipping showers of spray,
As we sailed through the waters of Jericho Bay!

Now were seen, lifting high,
'Twixt blue sea and blue sky,
Island mountains that rose from afar and nearby;
As we sailed in between
And we gazed on the scene,
Our hearts became light, and our spirits serene.

Ah, 'twas pleasant to be
Under Saddleback's lee,
Catching many good fish as e'er swam in the sea!
Then 'twas up and away,
At the close of the day,
Sailing home through the waters of Jericho Bay.

THE PINEWOODS FAIRIES

(Described by a boy)

I know a pinewoods path that leads
Close by a brookside dell,
Where fairies sport and hold their court,
And often weave a spell;
But when I come along and try
To see them at their play,
Those elves they shout: "Look out! look out!"
And quickly hide away!

They hide in hollows, under leaves,
In any sort of nook—
They'd surely quake if I could make
My way across the brook!
When I have gone a little by
They're out again, I know;
They dance in glee and laugh at me—
Oh, how I hate to go!

They've a thick, green, mossy carpet, strewn
With clustered berries red,
Where the sunlight makes pale yellow lakes
As it sifts from overhead;
And in that twilight underwood
Are fairies, everywhere!
Of course they flee at sight of me,
But I know they've been right there!

For seats they have great toadstools gay
Of orange, red, and pink;
I've almost seen those elves in green
Upon them—then I wink
And find the woods all empty, bare,
With not an elf in sight;
Am I asleep? Oh, no, I keep
That sort of thing for night!

Some day I shall surprise them
When they're not expecting me,
And up I'll creep and take a peep
To see what I can see;
And when I've sat and listened well
To all I care to hear,
I'll raise a shout, and, without doubt,
Puff!—they will disappear!

THE TIDE AT AVALON

The tide has fled long hours gone;
The beach is parched and dry—
Unhappily the shelving shore
Lies bared beneath the sky.

The shingle shimmers in the heat;
The air stirs not a breath;
The bay of Avalon now sleeps,
But not the sleep of death.

For hark! a murmuring is heard
That grows on every side;
The thirsty coast now feels again
The pulsing of the tide!

Incoming from the sea its flow
Makes sure, resistless way;
It covers up the outer ledge,
It creeps into the bay.

The boulders, burned and brown, that strew
The curving, shingle beach,
Sink out of sight as onward flow
The waters of the Reach.

The brimming flood has touched the edge
Of field and wooded shore—
Contented now is Avalon,
The tide is in once more.

THE BALLAD OF LESTER GRAY

This is the ballad of Lester Gray,
Our voyage on Penobscot Bay,
And all that did befall, that day.

Quoth Lester: "Off York Island fair
The fishing is the best there air;
And I will surely get you there."

The morning breaks with dismal cheer;
The rain it drizzles cold and drear;
A dead calm falls, now there, now here.

A rim of mist lies out to sea:
"A fog, and thick as it can be,"
Our captain says, "so home for me."

"Ah, do not turn us back so soon—
Alack!" we cry, "'tis not yet noon;
Let's venture to the Isle of Spoon."

Quoth cautious Lester, speaking slow,
"That's farther than I care to go;
I fear the ledge off Isle au Haut;

But yonder, east of Saddleback
Lies Halibut Rock, for fishing crack;
We'll make it on the starboard tack."

We fish: out goes each deep sea line
Through eight and ninety feet of brine—
In come the cod and haddock fine!

Springs up a wind that blows a gale:
"Lines in—a storm!" shouts Lester, pale,
And takes two reefs in the main sail.

The gale blows harder, topped by squalls—
Smash! wave on wave upon us falls—
The reeling vessel has close calls.

The wind about the rigging shrieks
As though a demon in it speaks—
It whines, howls, whistles—strange its freaks!

The captain steers and nothing saith;
The first mate laughs and jokes with Death;
(The second sits and holds his breath!)

Cr-a-a-ck! a cleat on deck rips out;
The jib is slacked and tears about
Till fastened to a shroud-eye stout.

Sn-a-a-p! a halyard parts in twain;
Once more the jib beats loose—'tis plain
It must be tied—we sail again.

“Quick, Lest! the lacing of the boom
Gives way; if 't goes 't will be our doom!”
'Tis fixed—escaped a watery tomb!

And now the anchor strains and moans—
Breaks loose! again it seems our bones
Must surely go to Davy Jones.

In stony silence all the day
The captain watches havoc play,
And “I'll be damned!” is all he'll say.

At last, within an island's lee,
From dangers of the Bay we're free:
('Twas very rough, you will agree!)

We anchor well within the Reach
And soon are safe upon the beach—
Too thankful, sirs, for any speech.

This is the ballad of Lester Gray,
And all that happened in a day
On glorious old Penobscot Bay!

MAINE FOG

The Fog Lifts

Roll out to sea, grey-white fog curtain!
Roll out, and let the Bay be clear!
O hidden green and fragrant islands,
In all your beauty reappear!

Approaching
the islands

The sun burns through the fog at last—
The warning bell, the whistle's blast,
The horn's deep moaning—all are past!

See yonder island's rampart rocks
Emerge from mists—behold the trees!
Inhale the fragrance of the firs,
Commingled with the salty breeze!

The wind has freshened, the Bay is free—
The fog has blown clear out to sea!

The Fog Shuts Down

I wish to be alone to-day;
To hold the world aloof, away;
Forget the turmoil of the town . . .
The fog is slowly shutting down.

The quieted
Reach

Now, welcome, soothing friend, pour in,
Obscure the shingle beach;
Make dull the roar upon the shore,
And quiet all the Reach.

Lost! lost the shadowy land. I row
With muffled oars upon the sea;
The misty circle round my boat
Is all the world that's left to me.

Lost on
the water

In vain I progress with the tide—
The ghostly magic-circle stays;
The fog has settled far and wide
And blotted out the capes and bays.

Lost in the fog! idly I drift
Within the milky, prisoning band
Until, through momentary rift,
I sight again the stable land.

In the
woods

It is not that the rain has kissed
The trees, and patters leaf to leaf—
The cool, green woods are white with mist,
And silent with a woodland's grief.

A friendly mist—that drenches flowers:
The wild rose, glistening as with dew,
Looks happy through the sunless hours,
And all its fragrance breathes anew.

The sweetfern's fronds reflect the light;
With moisture every grass blade tips;
Wild blueberries shine dully-bright;
With pearls each dainty cobweb drips.

The peace of
fog-bound
homes

The island homes along the road,
Dim-outlined through the watery fleece,
Built close to earth, of ancient mode—
Breathe forth an atmosphere of peace.

The peace of
the heart

All day peace, quiet, rest, and calm
Reign over hillside, wood, and bog;
And restless hearts are filled with balm
When soft blows in the ocean fog.

THE GARDENS OF THE REACH

I sing of pleasant gardens, not of gardens that
you know,
Where phlox, petunias, hollyhocks and spiced
nasturtiums grow;
Where paths go winding in and out as pretty as
can be—
My flowerless, pathless gardens lie beneath the
cool, green sea!

You'd never know my gardens when the tide has
left them bare—
No vestige of them can be seen, for only rocks
are there!
Far-scattered giant boulders stand, of every size
and shape,
Deep in the coves, along the shore, and on each
granite cape.

But when the tide comes in what transformation
meets the view!
The rocks are covered over, and the capes are
covered too;
And where but very recently the dreary clam-
flats lay,
Two fathoms deep the water lies—the "flats" are
now "the Bay"!

To visit in my gardens one must take a little boat,
And down the Reach, in sun and calm, just float,
and float, and float,
And bend one's head athwart the rail and gaze
down in the sea,
And he will know the gardens that have long been
known to me.

A field of yellow rock-weed, that seemed lifeless
when 'twas bare,
Waves golden just beneath the keel, as though it
waved in air;
And when you've floated over it, as like as not
you'll pass
Above a large plantation of tall, spidery eel grass.

You will see the leathery kelp leaves that are ten
feet long or so,
Detached from deeper gardens where the kelp is
wont to grow;
And in the muddy eel grass, though their forms
are very dim,
You will see the flounders nosing, and the horny
sculpin swim.

There are mussel beds to gaze at, and a starfish,
now and then,
And the prickly, round sea-urchins (that are star-
fish when they're "men"!)
There are periwinkles, barnacles—a million mil-
lion! More!
And a casual giant jelly-fish swims slow along the
shore.

But oh, the rocks and boulders just awash and
down below!
How startling is their hugeness as right over
them you go!
How beautiful their colors—brown, white, salmon-
pink and red—
How shapely, in their roundness, rising from the
dim sea bed!

I love the old land gardens, full of peonies and
phlox,
But I love as well sea gardens that are mainly
full of rocks;
There is such a fascination in our ever-changing
beach,
That I always like to drift across the gardens of
the Reach.

THE WILD DUCKS FLYING ACROSS
THE BAY

I am weary and worn with the city heat,
And the noisy, dusty, crowded street,
And I long to be far, far away
With the wild ducks, flying across the Bay!

They rise from the reeds on their winnowing
wings,
And out from the land the long line swings;
There is nothing their flight to stop or stay
As the ducks fly swiftly across the Bay.

Far over the waves they are flying high
Through the cool, milk-blue of the sunny sky . . .
They are gone! but in spirit I'm winging my way
With the wild ducks flying across the Bay.

THE REACH WOODS SPRING

Beneath a pine, in mossy cup,
Through tumbling sands it bubbles up.

The forest trees grow thick about—
Dim is the path that finds it out.

Through quiet-brooding day and night
Its clear, deep pool keeps mirror-bright.

Sometimes a squirrel comes to drink,
Again, a fox, and now a mink.

I come, a summer-thirsty soul,
To bend above its ferny bowl;

I slake my thirst; its presence bless;
My being filled with thankfulness.

For oh, it is so good a thing—
A cool, sweet, bubbling woodland spring!

THE SENTINELS, GRAY'S COVE

Upon a gentle height of land
Two fir trees, like tall brothers, stand;
They seem to one who near them dwells
 Heroic sentinels.

No armed encampment do they guard,
But they a peaceful watch and ward
Above a quiet farmhouse keep,
 And fields that round it sleep.

The first are they to greet the sun—
Their lonely nightly vigil done—
Rejoicing at the dawn to see
 The rear of darkness flee.

About their feet young voices ring;
The birds upon their shoulders sing;
Their shadows on the dial grass
 Tell sunny hours that pass.

Against the evening sky, in jet,
They form a friendly silhouette,
And whisper, in the failing light:
 "We guard you through the night."

THE FISH-HAWK TREE

Now who will come along with me
To climb to the nest in the Fish-hawk Tree!

.

Deep in the woods it stands, alone—
A high, old pine tree, mossy-grown.

There is no road or pathway near—
It grows on a rock ridge, wild and sheer.

One only knows just where it lies
By the fish-hawks; making mournful cries,

Soaring, alarmed, in the sky of blue,—
Wheeling and circling over you.

Press on through the brush and at last you'll see,
Deep-hid in the woods, the Fish-hawk Tree.

.

Come! here's the wood-road winding steep
Into the forest, dark and deep!

The dim and damp old wood road leads
Through thick-piled moss, through a clearing's
weeds,

Through groves of pine whose needles, shed,
Make soft, brown carpets for our tread

(Hark to the shrill and whistling cry
As the hawks our forms below espy!)

Now away through the tangled brush, and we
Are standing beneath the Fish-hawk Tree.

.

Now who will climb up to the nest—
A hard and dizzy climb, at best!

The branches conquered, one by one,
From shady depths to open sun,

Still up, on limbs swayed by each blast—
The nest-crowned top's attained at last!

.

Far yonder, in its rugged height,
Mount Desert Island meets the sight.

And north by east, as flies the crow,
Is seen the stately Isle au Haut.

Crowning the far horizon's rim
Is Blue Hill summit, distance-dim.

The waters of the Bay spread clear,
Dimpled with islands far and near.

The Deer Isle woods below extend
To where the sky and treetops blend.

Who would not change his place with me
To look from the top of the Fish-hawk Tree!

THE SONG OF BLUE HILL BAY

*Sing me a song, O Blue Hill Bay,
Blue Hill Bay, so wide and free;
Soothe me, this end of a weary day—
Sing as of old to me!*

*Sweet as the lap of its waves to my ear,—
Soft as the swish of its scattering spray,—
Deep from the caverns of memory dear
Sang to me Blue Hill Bay:*

“Behold! I bear you once again
Afar from urban tides of men
To where the flashing dolphin wheel;
To ledges black with basking seal;
To rocky islets’ tufted crests
Where seabirds build their scanty nests,
And, startled, rising from each brood,
Make clamorous the solitude.

Hark! there comes a sound that chills—
Sounds again that mournful note
Like a solemn dirge a-ringing—
’Tis my bell buoy, ever swinging,
“Danger! Danger!” wildly singing
To each passing boat.

Far from my shore, amid the sound and shock
Of angry waves, uprears gray Channel Rock;
Now nearly covered by the risen tide,
Anon thrust high in air, seen far and wide,—
A lone and fearsome pinnacle
Whose salt-encrusted sides could tell
Sad tales of shipwreck—sailor, mark it well!

My lighthouse stands where it commands
A sweep of water free;
When fades the day its cheering ray
Guides home the ships at sea—
On stormy night clear beams its light
To show a sheltering lee.

O Blue Hill Mountain, splendid dost thou rise
Above my bayhead waters, clad in pine!
A vast contentment 'neath thy round dome lies,
And restful peace and quietness are thine.
O happy village on thy side so fair!
O happy mortal who thy peace may share!"

*Thus was I soothed with a nautical lay,
Soothed as of old by the soul of the sea;
Thus, at the close of a weary day,
Sang Blue Hill Bay to me.*

LE PETIT PLAISANT

The Pleasant Little Island

The Pleasant Little Cottage

The Pleasant Little Lady

There is an island in the sea
Whose beauty hath made thrall of me—
 Le Petit Plaisant!

A rock-bound island, round whose shore
The North Atlantic waters roar,
Yet where sweet peace reigns evermore—
 Le Petit Plaisant!

The French explorer, de Champlain,
First sailed the rugged coast of Maine
 Near Le Petit Plaisant;
He named Mount Desert, as all know;
He named the lordly Isle au Haut;
Then bade his men take oars and row
 To Le Petit Plaisant.

The fishers gather in their spoil,
And all their lives mid perils toil
 Near Le Petit Plaisant;
Upon the island where they dwell
Their nets and gear are mended well;
They rest when rings the Sunday bell
 At Le Petit Plaisant.

A path runs up the village hill;
Through piney wood it wanders still,
 At Le Petit Plaisant;
It winds across a grassy lea;
It skirts a cliff edge dizzily,
And ends on rocks above the sea,
 At Le Petit Plaisant.

Stands there a cottage on a ledge—
At ocean's brink and land's last edge—
 Called Le Petit Plaisant;
The woods behind, the sea before,
A lovely garden at the door—
Ah, what could mortal wish for more
 Than Le Petit Plaisant!

The solitude that hither lies
Is broken by the sea-bird's cries,
 O'er Le Petit Plaisant;
It hath its proper voice, the shocks
Of breakers 'gainst the tumbled rocks
Whose piled-up mass the sea's might blocks
 At Le Petit Plaisant.

The far sea-rim, an isle near by—
Fill all the sunny, seaward sky
 At Le Petit Plaisant;
But shorewardly Mount Desert fair
Its five blue summits lifts in air
A view both beautiful and rare,
 At Le Petit Plaisant.

The pleasant cottage by the sea
Hath inmate named most fittingly
 La Petite Plaisante.
In body frail, in spirit strong,
She loves the sea, she loves its song—
They live companions all year long
 At Le Petit Plaisant.

Within her safe and snug domain
Defying storm and hurricane,
 Dwells La Petite Plaisante;
Her home is filled with choicest books;
Rare pictures hang in many nooks;
A white-draped window seaward looks
 From Le Petit Plaisant.

No days to her go wearily,
For: "Have I not my books?" says she—
 Says La Petite Plaisante;
At night, by her warm chimney, tiled,
She hears the stormy sea up-piled:
From inmost heart: "I love it wild,"
 Says La Petite Plaisante.

Envoy

Who knows your lure will love you long—
So runs the burden of my song—
 Loved Le Petit Plaisant;
Great bards of other islands sing;
To you this simple lay I bring—
Accept my heartfelt offering,
 Le Petit Plaisant!

ROLLING-STONE BEACH, MARSHALL'S
ISLAND

Where lonely Marshall's Island fronts the sea
The surf piles in upon the shelving shore,
And, in a rocky cove, with grating roar,
Rolls the round, beach-worn pebbles ceaselessly.

In their sad murmur Ocean speaks to me,
Its ebb and flow repeating still the theme:
Life—is it real, or illusive dream?
And what has been? and what is still to be?

It has been said in flowing, ebbing life
Man lives to die; from youth to age he grows—
A span of struggle, loving, toil and strife,
And into Death's dark realm in silence goes.
But no, to me the voice of Ocean saith
That death is life again, as life is death!

FAIRY LINEN

Oh, the morning's blithe and bonny,
And the world is going right;
Airs are soft and sweet as honey,
And each footstep zephyr-light;
All the long day will be sunny—
Raindrops cannot fall till night;
For the fairies have their linen on the grass!

Meadow fields are spread all over
With small, dainty garments; see
Hanging from the grass and clover
Filmy webs of lingerie;
Little looked they for a rover
To intrude himself, dear me!

Ne'er was any little fairy
Living in the forest green
Clad more gauzily and airy
Than in cobweb's silver sheen—
Ah, the pretty vests (be chary!),
Fairy size of sweet sixteen!

When the early sun is glancing
From each garment hung to dry
(Jewel-broidered robes entrancing)
How the diamonds catch the eye!
Just the proper robes for dancing—
They will don them by and by.

As the pleasant hours I squander
When the morning's bright with dew,
On the fairy-folk I ponder,
And I look for fairies, too!
But though watchful, as I wander,
I have never caught a view
Of the fairies gathering linen from the grass!

THE DAYS OF LONG AGO

Old Uncle Joel's Reverie by the Fire

The autumn day has ended, and the night has
brought a chill;
There is frost down in my meadow and upon my
pasture hill;
The late moon in my window sheds a wan and
feeble light,
And I hear a drowsy cricket shrilling low: "Good
night, good night";
Alone before the chimney, with the room a ruddy
glow,
I see pictures in the firelight of the days of long
ago.

While the fresh logs snap and crackle till they
make a cheery roar,
My spirits rise high with the flames that dance on
wall and floor;
I picture then the happy time when first my bride
and I
Sat hand in hand before the blaze—the wedding
day gone by.
Our hearts beat high with courage—little thought
I then of woe,
As we watched the blazing firebrands—in the days
of long ago.

The flames die down; the shadows grow more
deep about the room,
And with the darkening shadows deepen all my
thoughts with gloom;
Again I see a picture—here she breathed her last
good-bye;
I gazed upon Life's embers then—*these* still bring
forth a sigh

When I recollect the sorrow of that heavy-laden
blow—

Well, the healing years have left it in the days of
long ago.

Heigh ho! the backlog breaks in two; a thousand
sparks leap high—

They seem to show the glory of the way up to the
sky!

Some day my soul will leap like that, then she
and I will be

United in our love again for all eternity.

The hour is late, the blackening coals flare fit-
fully and low,

As I sit here dreaming, dreaming of the days of
long ago.

A DEER ISLE HAYRACK RIDE

You may talk about your autos,
And your steamcars, and all that,
But I will bet a shoestring,
Or my last year's old straw hat,
That you never had the pleasure
In their speed and in their ease;
In their foolish frills and furbelows
For people hard to please—
As would you if you shared the joy
That always does abide
In an old-fashioned, jouncy, bumpy,
Jolly hayrack ride!

For it's: "Git-ep, Maud, go long with you,
We're only half way there!"
And: "Gee! how dark the woods are . . .
"Now you, Harold, don't you dare!"
And: "What's the tickle on my neck—
The hay's got in my hair!"
As we jog along the road till early morning.

How the stars peer down between the trees
To light us on our way;
How every now and then we get
A salt breeze from the Bay!
And now the woods are passed;
Ahead the village lights appear;
We cross the tide-pond dam;
Our evening's goal is drawing near;—
A deep-sea captain's home,
Whose welcoming door is open wide—
Oh, who would miss the pleasure of a
Deer Isle hayrack ride!

Then it's: "All out, folks, go in the house
And get a cup of cheer;
Hem! Boys, come meet the 'Governor,'
(Sh! in the kitchen here!)
Now all be jolly, sing and play
'Till daylight doth appear,'
And we'll make the rafters ring till early morning!"

The world's asleep as home we go
Along the lonesome road;
But wide awake our hayrack crew—
Just fourteen in the load:
We sing of "Annie Laurie,"
And, more softly, "Sweet and Low,"
"When the Roll is Called up Yonder,"
And the tune of "Old Black Joe";
And ere we know the time has gone—
We leave no song untried—
We're in the farmyard once again,
And end our hayrack ride.

Now it's: "Three cheers and a tiger
For the Boss of Sea-View Farm!
Give three more for its Mistress!—
Three for Maud, out in the barn!"
Then we serenade the sleepy ones
Who sought the bedclothes warm—
And we all are sound asleep—in early morning!

THE CRUISE

Said Captain Thompson, raking hay:
"Let's you and I cruise down the Bay;
Tomorrow's goin' to be fair—
I like the feelin' of the air."

The Captain, he was old and tough—
A Gloucester fisherman's life is rough—
For forty years he'd sailed the seas,
And now as farmer took his ease.

A pounding on my bedroom door:
"Get up—it's mornin'—goin' on four";
Downstairs, with lamp lit handy by,
We had some crullers, milk, and pie.

As we went down the pasture lane
The underbrush lay wet with dew;
The moon was sadly on the wane—
It looked as if 't were cut in two.

In silence on the quiet shore
We launched the boat—it was no far row
As, pulling past the ledge, we bore
To where was moored the sailboat Argo.

Anon the mooring's slipped, the sails
Hang flabby, empty; short our speech;
The Captain rank bilge water bails
As slowly we drift down the Reach.

The night is cold, with naught that cheers;
The Captain slumbers as he steers;
The moon is gone from overhead—
I wish that I were back in bed.

I must have dozed; I gave a yawn
And looked around, and saw 'twas dawn;
The sun rose out of Eastern Bay,
The breeze sprang up—and it was day!

Old Captain Thompson trimmed each sheet,
Then looked for somewhat good to eat,
And then he shelled the bait:
He sharpened fishhooks needle-fine
And bent them on each tarred cod line—
Those snoods, they gripped like Fate:
The tide was with us, the breeze was strong,
And Captain Thompson burst in song
As I will now relate:

*The Shamrock and Defender
Were a-sailin' for the Cup;
The Defender's topmast went down by the board;
The Shamrock scooted by us,
And looked like the game was up:
"You boys are licked," old Tommy Lipton roared.
"The hell we are," yelled Captain Barr,
"We'll trim you saltines yet.—
Tomorrow there's another race to run":
We cleared away the wreckage
And put in another spar—
We beat the Shamrock, and the Cup we won.*

So sang he in a high-pitched tone,
As oft before when all alone
Far out upon the sea;
He cared not that his voice was cracked,
That it of timbre something lacked—
And not at all for me.

It was a joy to hear him there—
The Bay so free and wide—
Singing his song with mind content,

At home on his own element—
No trained musician could have lent
A charm to it beside.

We sailed the mountain-bordered Bay—
The fair wind holding all the way—
From Lazy Gut and Devil's Nose
(The whitecaps all about us rose)
To far-out Isle of Spoon.
And there, upon the ocean swell
That rocked the Argo passing well,
Hove to, to drift a shoal, now we
Cast out our lines into the sea—
We fished till nearly noon.

The Captain now brought out a store
Of sandwiches, boiled eggs galore,
And cookies, cakes, and good things more.

We ate, and rocked, and looked around—
Far off a sail toward us stood;
A bell-buoy, near, made doleful sound;
But oh, the world seemed jolly good!

We fished the afternoon away,
Then headed for Swans Island Light,
Where harbor, sheltered, safe and calm
Would be our berth the coming night.

Hard put to make our haven sailed
A lumber schooner in distress,
Deep water-logged, with deck awash—
Her deck load in a sorry mess.

She made the port in heavy draft—
This leaking Nova Scotia craft,—
And, like to sink, with sounding thud,
Stuck fast her nose in harbor mud.

We anchored near the partial wreck
And made all fast, and snug, and tight—
Tied up the sails and washed the deck—
In preparation for the night.

I rowed the dory to the shore
To buy some sugar at the store:
(We'd looked and found we had no more).

The tide was low; I had to climb
The fish-house ladder, strong with slime,
And took a path—there was no street—
To where the town bought things to eat.

The store—a smell of kerosene,
Of oilskins, oakum, hempen rope,
Of dry goods, paint, and salted fish,
Bananas, crackers, tar, and soap.

I made my purchase, soon was back
To where the Argo lay, and now
A supper-smoke came from her stack
And drifted up beyond her prow.

It was the twilight hour, around
Were moored the hardy lobstermen,
Returned-home fishers, sailboats bound
From port to port—some eight or ten.

The Captain at the galley stove,
While boiling us our pot of coffee,
Talked with the skippers round us hove,
And bantered with them—prone to scoff, he.

“Hullo, Cap Gray!” I heard him say,
His head framed in the galley hatch,
“Ye beat us gettin' down the Bay—
I'll bet we got a bigger catch.”

“Ahoy, Cap Thompson!” Gray called back,
“When you and me sailed out of Gloucester
We both done well on that ole smack—
But I was high-line on the roster!”

Now, up above, the stars came out,
And ere the Dipper’s form was clear
Within the village round about
The lamps were lighted, far and near.
The water—strange to me the sight—
Seemed molten fire in the night!

Ten thousand fireflies rose and fell
Each time the Argo took a swell;
Out in the dark, as someone rowed,
The oar-dips phosphorescent glowed;
Though I the boat could not discern,
I saw bright sparkles trail its stern!

I found the Captain snug and fit,
The galley warm, the lantern lit—
Damp bedclothes round him, in a heap,
Sole preparation for his sleep:
“You’d better turn in now,” said he,
“We lift our hook at half-past three.”
I sought the cabin, closed the door,
And soon I heard the Captain snore.

My pillow was my folded coat—
I tossed—quite strange aboard a boat—
As often as it swung about
The weary moon came sadly in
The cabin window, wan and thin—
And then it wandered out.

I watched it come, I watched it go,
It came and went so very slow,
As I lay there in bed,

I only knew that it had set
And dawn had come, raw, cold and wet,
By tramlings overhead.

The Captain had the mainsail up,
Had hauled the anchor in as well;
Scarce breeze was there to fill a cup,
And even that light zephyr fell;
Said then the skipper: "If we go
Some one must take this craft in tow."

Our dory to the bowsprit, fast,
I bent to oars right lustily—
We made the harbor mouth at last,
And felt the swell of open sea:
The breeze sprang up, we sailed away
To cruise about another day.

We steered a course for Spirit Ledge—
The land's last hold on Ocean's edge:
The breeze came fresher, sharp and cold;
The Argo dipped and rocked and rolled
Out in the choppy sea:
We hove to off those ragged rocks
And fished amid the heaves and shocks—
We pulled in fifty-three.

It was a wild and fearsome sight
To see the ocean in its might
Rear waves that reached the island's height!
From out the deep, with frothy edge,
They grew, till like a mighty sledge
Boom! boom! they crashed on Spirit Ledge!

The Captain yarned: a Norway bark
Struck here one snowy night, and dark;
She pounded soon into a wreck,

The crew, upon her torn-off deck,
Were washed away—the story ends—
Were saved, and got back to their friends.

By wind and tide and height of sun
’Twas time to make the homeward run;
Within the shelter of the Bay
The waves decreased and smoothed away;
And as we sailed—the way was long—
The Captain sang himself a song:

*As I came back from Bay Chaleur,
As I sailed in from sea,
I met a girl in Gloucester town
As pretty as could be.*

*Says I: "I'm just a sailor lad,
But I'll to you be true:
I'll love you always, Sally Jones—
Say, may I marry you?"*

*She tossed her head; she stamped her foot,
Upon me she did frown:
Says she: "I hear you sailors
Have a wife in every town."*

Says I—

but now he let me steer—
The course ahead was safe and clear;
He washed the gurry from our catch,
And placed his salt pail on the hatch.

And now he cleaned the fish, the while
The seagulls flocked around;
It was a very pretty sight
To see their flashing wings of white;
Their diving from an airy height—
And clamorous was their sound.

Amid the many islands green
We sailed the afternoon serene;
The sunset light now shone between
The blue sky and the Bay;
Deep shadows lay along the Reach
As once again we made our beach,
Too tired out for any speech,
That pleasant close of day.

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Said Captain Thompson, come next Sunday:
"Let's you and I go fishin' Monday."
What need my answer to relate?—
I hurried out to dig the bait!

MEMORIES OF MAINE

The traffic rumbles in the street,
The river whistles fill the air,
But fainter seem the sounds that tell
Of urban toil and care;

For I am gazing over roofs
To where the river meets the Bay,
And on the tide my thoughts are borne
To regions far away.

They rest upon an isle of Maine
Encircled by a soft, blue sea;
Again, in memories of old,
Its pictures come to me.

I see its morning fields fresh bathed
By ocean mists the sun drives back;
Its fern-edged roads through fragrant woods
Of pine and hackmatack;

The lonely beach; the crying gulls;
The yellow rockweed on the ledge;
The far blue hills of Mount Desert;
The ocean to its edge.

The vision goes: again I hear
The city's old familiar strain—
Ah, pleasant are the moments filled
With memories of Maine!

