

**NOTES FROM THE EDITOR: THE 1920 TRANSLATION OF THE
STEFANO MANUSCRIPT**

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Photo: Rathe Family

Young Angelina (Cietcovich) Baccich

Angelina Baccich, the translator of the *Stefano* manuscript, was born as Angelina Cietcovich, on 27 April 1869, in New Orleans, to a prosperous family with Croatian ancestry. In 1881, when she was just a teenager, Angelina was introduced to a young, 22-year-old captain from Dubrovnik who had sailed to New Orleans on his ship the *Risorto* (*Resurrected*). The captain's name was Miho Bačić and he had an extraordinary tale to tell. Six years earlier, when he was a sixteen-year-old naval cadet, his ship the *Stefano* was shipwrecked on the far away coast of Australia. From a crew of 17, only he and another mariner survived the ordeal. He too would have met a certain death were it not for a tribe of Indigenous Australians who rescued him and cared for him for many months. Together, they wandered around the hot North West coast of Australia completely naked, living on turtles, snakes, lizards and grubs. They slept in holes dug in sand.



Photo: Rathe Family

Young Miho Baccich (left) in New Orleans

He was now tired of the seafaring life and wanted to settle in New Orleans to work for Angelina's father. His only possession was the *Resurrection's* chronometer.¹ Angelina wanted to study languages. Six years later they married and their family grew quickly – six daughters and one son. We don't know when Miho told Angelina of his manuscript, but we do know that she translated it in 1920. She died five years later on 27 June 1925.

I was given a copy of Angelina's manuscript by her grandson Gustave Rathe in 2000. When the publication of her manuscript came up for consideration, Rathe was no longer in good health and could not resolve any of the editorial issues which arose. This was most unfortunate as he had a most intimate knowledge of his grandmother's manuscript, having used it as the foundation for his own book, *The Wreck of the Barque Stefano Off the North West Cape of Australia in 1875*.² As there was no one else with the same understanding of the manuscript as Rathe, the editorial decisions, in the end, were left to me alone. Some of these editorial considerations are described below.

The original 1876 *Stefano* manuscript was written at the time when the North West coast of Western Australia was relatively unexplored and when the details of its indigenous cultures were little known to the rest of the world. For these reasons the manuscript is an important contribution to our knowledge of these indigenous groups.³ In preparing Angelina's translation for publication, my primary aim was to ensure that the anthropological details pertaining to the North West indigenous cultures were preserved as closely as possible in the translation as they were in the

original manuscript. Whenever I encountered ambiguities or errors in the translation, I generally restored the meaning as found in the original text. For this purpose I used the copy of the original manuscript that is held in the Rijeka Maritime Museum, Croatia.⁴ Pages of this manuscript are indicated in the published translation to the nearest sentence and in square brackets.

With editorial decisions I kept in mind that Angelina was not a simple translator who committed simple errors in translation. First and foremost, she was the wife of a man who was central to the original manuscript story and who by all accounts should be considered as the primary author. At the time of the translation Miho Baccich was a sprightly 60-year-old who was going to live for another 15 years. This is what his translator-wife had to say about him in 1920:

Today, after the passing of forty-four (44) years, the events indelibly imprinted on the mind of the youthful Baccich, stand out as vividly as at the time of their occurrence.⁵

In these circumstances, it is not likely that Miho would have been a passive observer of the translation process as the story was obviously important to him. In other words, with Angelina's translation we have a second appraisal of the original story – this time not by a 17-year-old cadet, but by a wise 60-year-old man. The difference between the two manuscripts is the “voice” of Angelina. Her narrative “additions” are substantial in the earlier chapters but then quickly taper off. These “additions” are also easy to separate from the original text, so much so that it would have been very easy to have cut them out if this was so desired. I have preserved all Angelina's literary interventions as these are worthy additions to the original manuscript, which otherwise remains substantially the same as the one that her much younger husband narrated to Canon Stjepan Skurla in Dubrovnik at the end of 1876. To delineate Angelina's “additions” from the original text I have framed them with a “box” as indicated below:

She struck where the white and fleecy waves
 Looked soft as corded wool,
 But the cruel rocks, they gored her side
 Like the horns of an angry bull.⁶

Small “additions” within manuscript sentences, which do not detract from the meaning in the original manuscript, have been left unedited. Incidental errors such as the use of “Austrian” in place of “Austro-Hungarian” were changed along with other small grammatical and stylistic omissions. Measures of length and distance were mostly restored to their original metric form except when the original text itself was not consistent – some of its measurements were given in feet.

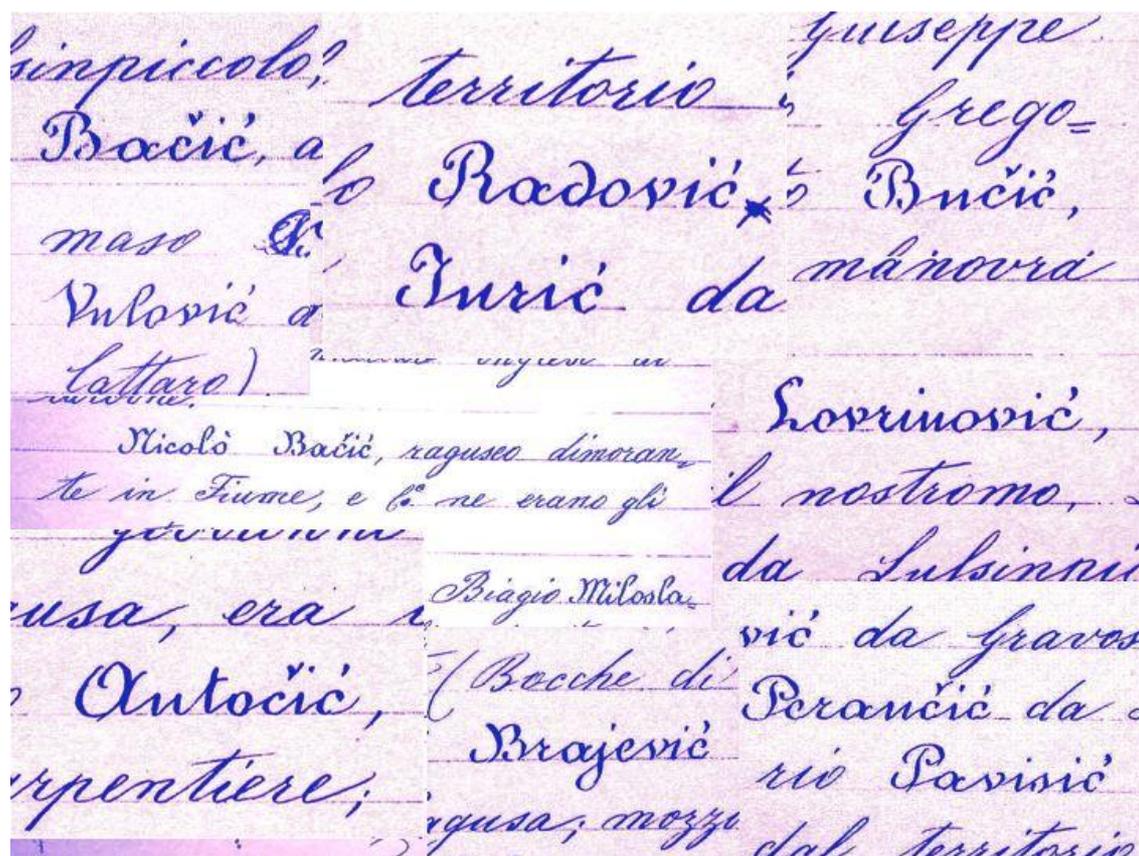
Angelina's major intervention is in Chapter III, which deals with the history of Australia. Clearly, this history was better known to her when she was translating the manuscript in 1920, than in 1876 when the original manuscript was written. But Angelina's historical “additions” do not change the central content of this chapter. In it Miho passionately defends Aboriginal people whom he considered to be under threat from the ravages of colonization. This element of the original manuscript is left essentially unchanged in the translation.

The translation manuscript that Rathe gave me in 2000 had two Abstracts: one was Skurla's original Abstract as updated by Angelina in 1920. The second Abstract is authored by Angelina herself. Angelina's Abstract subsumes Skurla's 1876 Abstract

while acknowledging him and updating it. It was possible to separate Skurla's Abstract from Angelina's Abstract, leaving us with a short and elegant difference, which I have packaged as "Translator's Note" in this publication. In her Abstract, Angelina attributes the information in the manuscript to her husband. The second survivor Ivan Jurich is designated as someone who corroborated the information given by her husband. This is somewhat different from Skurla's Abstract in which the two survivors are treated equally. In all likelihood, Angelina's description is closer to the reality of what actually happened, as outlined in the 'Who is the Author of the 1876 *Stefano* Manuscript?' section of this publication.

One should also note that both Skurla and Angelina were writing in the vernacular of their times, in which terms such as "*negro*", "*savages*", "*primitive*" were not all that unusual. In Angelina's translation some of these terms were foregrounded on a number of occasions to dramatize the plight of her husband and generally to further amplify the generosity of indigenous Australians. As these terms are textually inappropriate for indigenous Australians today they have been replaced with "Aborigines", "indigenous Australians" or "blacks" as appropriate and without changing the essential meaning of the underlying content. On such occasions I always used the original manuscript as the primary guide.

Most errors in Angelina's translation came from inadvertent errors in the names of mariners. Stjepan Skurla in his original manuscript is unambiguous about the linguistic origins of the sailors on the *Stefano*. All but Henry Groiss are assigned Croatian names in Croatian type. My own research has confirmed as much, as does the research of Dr Nenad Vekaric, Director of Dubrovnik's History branch of the Croatian Academy of Arts and Sciences, who has researched the genealogy of the *Stefano*'s sailors.⁷ According to Vekaric, Stjepan, Skurla was acutely sensitive to the nationalities of the *Stefano* sailors when he penned the manuscript. He indicates as much through the Croatian type of their surnames and by their precise spelling. This is most evident with much-loved Deputy Captain Karlo *Costa*. Phonetically, the name *Costa* in Croatian would be pronounced with a "c" that is closer to "c" in "central" rather than "k" as in "Kosta" – its correct Italian pronunciation. In the manuscript Skurla retained the Italian spelling of *Costa*, indicating to the readers that *Costa* was someone who had an Italian heritage. The surnames of all other mariners in the manuscript except Henry Grosse are designated as Croatian speakers even though the document itself is written in Italian: *Antončić*, *Bačić*, *Brajević*, *Bučić*, *Dediol*, *Jurić*, *Lovrinović*, *Miloslavić*, *Osoinak*, *Pavisić*, *Perančić*, *Radović*, *Vukasinović*, *Vulović*, *Zanetović* and *Skurla* himself. A collage of these crew names extracted from the manuscript is depicted below:



Names of the *Stefano* crew extracted from the manuscript

These indigenous Croatian names of the *Stefano* crew were written into Italian manuscript by *Skurla* and then translated into English by Angelina. This process was not always straightforward. For example Ivan Jurić, becomes Giovanni Jurić in the Italian manuscript and John Jurich in the English translation. Another problem with these translations is that the English and Italian alphabets do not have all the letters of the Croatian alphabet and thus cannot render Croatian pronunciations accurately. As a result, translations were often made with the view of keeping the pronunciations as close to the original as possible, hence the “ch” (ć) ending sound in English and “cc” sound in Italian – also pronounced “ch”. These well-intentioned additions, in turn, give rise to linguistic distortions in both the spelling and pronunciation of names. For example, the Croatian Bačić, becomes Baccich in Italian, which is often pronounced as Bassich in English. The proximity of two crew names, Bucich and Baccich (Bučić and Bačić), added to confusion on a number of occasions in the translation. Then there were additional quandaries with the names of Miho Bačić himself who, at the time of Angelina’s translation in 1920, is an American citizen Michael Baccich.

Yet another problem associated with the *Stefano* names arises from the geopolitical reality of the *Stefano*’s Dalmatian and Croatian crew, who, in the context of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, were formally registered everywhere in the “official” Italian language.⁸ The proper and ethical course of action in the translation was to restore the correct national identities to the *Stefano* mariners as indicated in the original 1876 manuscript. Accordingly I have followed Rathe’s convention by retaining the original Croatian crew names when describing the manuscript albeit with and English-friendly “ch” endings. In the translation itself I have retaining the Croatian type as in the original manuscript. The same authentically “indigenous” conventions are used for names of places in the translation.

My notes would be incomplete if I did not say something of Angelina's framed "additions". We don't know if Angelina intended to publish her translation but the register of her voice is consistent throughout. It is most likely that she wanted her children and grandchildren to read her husband's story in English as if narrated by her. At times her editorial "additions" are those of a proud wife and mother of seven children who is amazed by the ordeal that her husband underwent. On two occasions, at least, she tells us that not a single sailor on the barque *Stefano* was married.

What odd and curious presents would they bring home to their loved ones! How the sweetheart would delight with the precious little tokens destined later to adorn a humble home! How a mother would bless her dutiful son for his kindly thoughts of her! How a dear and kind sister would rejoice over some token of brotherly love!⁹

Her "additions" are often given to us at the most dramatic moments of the story, when Angelina makes us think of the mothers and sisters of these men in peril.

Who was to follow the fate of *Perančić* and the little English boy? Is it you? Is it I? Mother, home, heaven! Of these three magic and soothing words, which was now on their lips? Would a mother or a home ever welcome them again? Though human nature and human frailty are always inclined to cling to hope even against hope, yet in this desperate case, the sweet sister of faith and charity seemed to have deserted them; she had left these unfortunate sailors to their fate in an angry ocean and instead was smiling most benignly on a growing youth, on a happy bride!¹⁰

On other occasions Angelina writes as if she was leading the chorus in a Greek play, detaching us from the narrative and addressing the reader directly with questions that have to do with the reader's own sense of values as these pertain to the unfolding action.

You, who have led a smooth and happy existence, who have never known a stormy day morally or physically, who have always enjoyed health and prosperity, think for a moment of these unhappy young men, for young indeed they all were. Sad and discouraged at heart, sore, wounded and bleeding in body, starving and parched with thirst, death lurking perilously near, life and hope smiling to them, calling them if only that little strip of shore could be reached in the immensity of the ocean. Oh! How futile our endeavors! Then and then alone, man realizes his nothingness; God alone can help him. Think of that in your prosperity, you who have suffered adversity as well as you who have never felt its cruel and bitter sting.¹¹

At other times we can imagine her as the Madonna in the votive paintings – the caring, merciful mother figure who stands suspended on an ethereal moon, sky, or a cloud as she watches upon all wandering sailors below.



Photo: Rathe Family

Angelina Baccich as a young woman

Not all her contributions are “additions”. On a few occasions she condenses sentences when she considers these to be superfluous to the main thrust of the story. When she intervenes in this fashion, she does it with considerable literary flair. For example, the original description of the rigging on page [1] of the manuscript is somewhat specific and includes details of foremast (foresail, fore topsail, topgallant and fore royal), main mast (mainsail, main topsail, main topgallant and main royal), spanker mast (spanker and gaff topsail), bowsprit (with four jibs), three stay sails strung between the main mast and the foremast, and two similar sails between the main and spanker masts. For those interested in recreating every structural specification of the *Stefano*, these are no doubt important details. But Angelina does not think that they are all that important to the story in this particular instance. She summarises the entire rigging operation as follows:

The sailors, all expert seamen, soon had the vessel fully rigged and equipped, from prow to helm all sails were unfurled giving the barque the appearance of a large beautiful bird.

The poetry lines that Angelina “adds” to the manuscript may have been of her own choosing, although Rathe indicated to me fleetingly in 2000 that these were connected with the benefit concert held at Fremantle’s Oddfellows’ Hall on 8 and 16 June 1876. In his book Rathe describes this event as follows:

The chief promoter of these events was James Pearce, ex-convict, bookseller and stationer, and proprietor of Fremantle’s vigorous weekly newspaper. These variety concerts, of the style then in vogue at both port and capital, embraced all kinds of vocal, instrumental and literary offerings, along with the band of the Rifle

Volunteers. At the second concert Pearce made considerable exactions on the sympathies of all present with his vivid rendering of a maudlin poem entitled ‘The Ship That Went Down’ by Adah Isaacs Menken, a celebrated actress who hailed from New Orleans. The Oddfellows’ Hall in Cliff Street was “crowded to suffocation” on the 8th, and the audience was again very numerous and fashionable on the 16th.¹²

The high point of the evening – the poem *The Ship That Went Down* – may well have been an element of Angelina’s own literary upbringing. It was written in 1873 by Adah Isaacs Menken from Angelina’s own birthplace of New Orleans – a city where Miho and Angelina would subsequently raise their family. By all accounts Menken was a spectacular persona and not someone who could easily be ignored. Her poems may well have inspired Angelina’s ethereal register, as we are told by her grandson Gustave Rathe that she was a language scholar.¹³ The poem is reproduced here in Appendix 2.

NOTES AND REFERENCES – NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

- 1 This chronometer is now with the Rathe family.
- 2 Rathe, Gustave; *The Wreck Of The Barque Stefano Off The North West Cape Of Australia In 1875*, (Carlisle, WA, Hesperian Press, 1990)
- 3 These were most likely two Yinikurtira Aboriginal tribes.
- 4 The original is in Italian as is the title – *I Naufraghi del Bark Austro-Ungarico Stefano alla Costa Nord-Ovest dell Australia*.
- 5 See “Translator’s Preface” in this publication.
- 6 This poetic “addition” is made on page [17] of the manuscript. It is an extract from “Wreck of the Hesperus” a 1839 poem by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. The poem is interesting as its focus is on the young daughter of the captain of the Hesperus. The poem was inspired by the wreck of the schooner Hesperus on the reef of Norman’s Woe, off Gloucester, Massachusetts some twenty years earlier. One body washed ashore was lashed to a spar, as described in the poem included in Appendix 1.
- 7 This comes from personal correspondence and other genealogical material given to the editor by Dr Nenad Vekaric, Director of Dubrovnik’s History branch of the Croatian Academy of Arts and Sciences. Genealogies of many of the *Stefano* crew can be found in Vekaric, Nenad; *Peljeski Rodovi, Serija: Prilozi Povjesti Stanovnistva Dubrovnika I Okolice. Knjiga 5, Svezak 2, Dubrovnik 1996*.
8. This quaint example of ethnocentric manipulation has been relegated to the junk-bin of history by Dalmatian people. According to Nenad Vekaric, Director of the Croatian Academy of Arts and Sciences (Dubrovnik History branch), in the late nineteenth century around 94% of Dubrovnik’s population were Croatian speakers for whom Italian was a foreign language. This is best evidenced by Dubrovnik’s court records where, time and time again, interpreters had to be arranged for defendants so that the proceedings of the court – held in what to them was the foreign Italian language – could be properly understood. For a genealogy of Dubrovnik and surrounding area see Vekaric, Nenad; op. cit. *Peljeski Rodovi, Serija: Prilozi Povjesti Stanovnistva Dubrovnika I Okolice. Knjiga 5, Svezak 2, Dubrovnik 1996*.

- 9 Page [1] of the published manuscript.
- 10 Page [21] of the published manuscript.
- 11 Page [26] of the published manuscript.
- 12 Rathe, Gustave; *The Wreck Of The Barque Stefano Off The North West Cape Of Australia In 1875*, (Carlisle, WA, Hesperian Press, 1990), Note (*) p.95.
This benefit concert held for the survivors was reported in the *Inquirer*, 9 August 1876, *Supplement*. Quoted from Smoje, Neven; “Shipwrecked on the North-West Coast: The Ordeal of the Survivors of the *Stefano*”, in *Early Days*, Volume 8, Part 2. 1978, p. 44 and Note 6. I have subsequently found that the Oddfellows’ Hall was not in Cliff Street but in William Street, Fremantle. It was demolished in 1919. See Kerr, W. *Architecture in Fremantle 1875-1915*, pp. 9, 80, 85-86.
- 13 Rathe, Gustave; *The Wreck Of The Barque Stefano Off The North West Cape Of Australia In 1875*, (Carlisle, WA, Hesperian Press, 1990), Note (*) p.107.

APPENDIX 1

WRECK OF THE HESPERUS

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

It was the schooner Hesperus,
That sailed the wintery sea;
And the skipper had taken his little daughter,
To bear him company.

Blue were her eyes as the fairy flax,
Her cheeks like the dawn of day,
And her bosom white as the hawthorn buds,
That ope in the month of May.

The Skipper he stood beside the helm,
His pipe was in his mouth,
And he watched how the veering flaw did blow
The smoke now West, now South.

Then up and spake an old Sailor,
Had sailed the Spanish Main,
"I pray thee, put into yonder port,
for I fear a hurricane.

"Last night the moon had a golden ring,
And to-night no moon we see!"
The skipper, he blew whiff from his pipe,
And a scornful laugh laughed he.

Colder and louder blew the wind,
A gale from the Northeast,
The snow fell hissing in the brine,
And the billows frothed like yeast.

Down came the storm, and smote amain
The vessel in its strength;
She shuddered and paused, like a frightened steed,
Then leaped her cable's length.

"Come hither! come hither! my little daughter,
And do not tremble so;
For I can weather the roughest gale
That ever wind did blow."

He wrapped her warm in his seaman's coat
 Against the stinging blast;
 He cut a rope from a broken spar,
 And bound her to the mast.

"O father! I hear the church bells ring,
 Oh, say, what may it be?"
 "'Tis a fog-bell on a rock bound coast!" --
 And he steered for the open sea.

"O father! I hear the sound of guns;
 Oh, say, what may it be?"
 Some ship in distress, that cannot live
 In such an angry sea!"

"O father! I see a gleaming light.
 Oh say, what may it be?"
 But the father answered never a word,
 A frozen corpse was he.

Lashed to the helm, all stiff and stark,
 With his face turned to the skies,
 The lantern gleamed through the gleaming snow
 On his fixed and glassy eyes.

Then the maiden clasped her hands and prayed
 That saved she might be;
 And she thought of Christ, who stilled the wave,
 On the Lake of Galilee.

And fast through the midnight dark and drear,
 Through the whistling sleet and snow,
 Like a sheeted ghost, the vessel swept
 Tow'rds the reef of Norman's Woe.

And ever the fitful gusts between
 A sound came from the land;
 It was the sound of the trampling surf,
 On the rocks and hard sea-sand.

The breakers were right beneath her bows,
 She drifted a dreary wreck,
 And a whooping billow swept the crew
 Like icicles from her deck.

She struck where the white and fleecy waves
 Looked soft as carded wool,
 But the cruel rocks, they gored her side
 Like the horns of an angry bull.

Her rattling shrouds, all sheathed in ice,
With the masts went by the board;
Like a vessel of glass, she stove and sank,
Ho! ho! the breakers roared!

At daybreak, on the bleak sea-beach,
A fisherman stood aghast,
To see the form of a maiden fair,
Lashed close to a drifting mast.

The salt sea was frozen on her breast,
The salt tears in her eyes;
And he saw her hair, like the brown sea-weed,
On the billows fall and rise.

Such was the wreck of the Hesperus,
In the midnight and the snow!
Christ save us all from a death like this,
On the reef of Norman's Woe!

APPENDIX 2

THE SHIP THAT WENT DOWN

Adah Isaacs Menken (1835-1868)

I

Who hath not sent out ships to sea?
 Who hath not toiled through light and darkness to make them strong for battle?
 And how we freighted them with dust from the mountain mines!
 And red gold, coined from the heart's blood, rich in Youth, Love and Beauty!
 And we have fondly sent forth on their white decks seven times a hundred souls.
 Sent them out like sea-girt worlds full of hope, love, care, and faith.
 O mariners, mariners, watch and beware!

II

See the Ship that I sent forth!
 How proudly she nods her regal head to each saluting wave!
 How defiantly she flaps her white sails at the sun, who, in envy of her beauty, screens
 his face behind a passing cloud, yet never losing sight of her.
 The ocean hath deck'd himself in robes of softest blue, and lifted his spray-flags to
 greet her.
 The crimson sky hath swooped down from her Heaven-Palace, and sitteth with her
 white feet dabbling in the borders of the sea, while she sendeth sweet promises on the
 wings of the wind to my fair Ship.
 O mariners, mariners, why did ye not watch and beware?

III

The faithless sky is black.
 The ocean howls on the Ship's rough track.
 The strong wind, and the shouting rain swept by like an armed host whooping out
 their wild battle-cry.
 The tall masts dip their heads down into the deep.
 The wet shrouds rattle as they seem to whisper prayers to themselves;
 But the waves leap over their pallid sails, and grapple and gnaw at their seams.
 The poor Ship shrieks and groans out her despair.
 She rises up to plead with the sky, and sinks down the deep valley of water to pray.
 O God, make us strong for the battle!

IV

What says the mariner so hurried and pale?
 No need to whisper it, speak out, speak!
 Danger and peril you say?
 Does your quivering lip and white cheek mean that the good Ship must go down?
 Why stand ye idle and silent?
 O sailors, rouse your brave hearts!

Man the rocking masts, and reef the rattling sails!
 Heed not the storm-fires that so terribly burn in the black sky!
 Heed not the storm-mad sea below!
 Heed not the death-cry of the waves!
 Foot to foot, hand to hand! Toil on brave hearts!
 Our good Ship must be saved!
 Before us lies the goal!

V

Too late, too late!
 The life-boats are lost.
 The rent spars have groaned out their lives, and the white sails have shrouded them in their rough beds of Death.
 Strong mariners have fainted and failed in the terror and strife.
 White lips are grasping for breath, and trembling out prayers, and waiting to die.
 And the Ship, once so fair, lies a life-freighted wreck.
 The Promises, Hopes, and Loves, are sinking, sinking away.
 The winds shriek out their joy, and the waves shout out their anthem of Death.
 Pitiless wind!
 Pitiless ocean!

VI

O mariners, is there no help?
 Is there no beacon-light in the distance?
 Dash the tears of blood from your eyes, and look over these Alps of water!
 See ye no sail glittering through the darkness?
 Is there no help?
 Must they all die, all die?
 So much of Youth, so much of Beauty, so much of Life?
 The waves answer with ravenous roar;
 They grapple like demons the trembling Ship!
 Compassless, rudderless, the poor Ship pleads.
 In vain! in vain!
 With a struggling, shivering, dying grasp, my good Ship sank down, down, down to the soundless folds of the fathomless ocean.
 Lost—lost—lost.

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