St. George Reef Lighthouse, CA

A Secret of the Sea

[Original]

By H.A.

At the foot of the bare brown cliffs,
Half hid in the drifted sand,
With the rack of the sea for a winding sheet
And the moan of the waves on the strand
Sobbing a dirge o'er the resting place
Of a secret of wreck and woe,
Lies a broken mast and a few poor timbers
By which like sentinels guarding a city
The sea gulls come and go.

Sad story these battered fragments
Bring from some dreary wreck,
A tale of a ship with noble souls
And a midnight watch on deck.
'Mid the whistle and howl of the storm fiend,
With the sea a raging hell;
Not a star to guide through the awful night,
Naught save the shriek of the sea birds white
And the sound of distant bell.

Through the roaring, seething turmoil,
Through the blast of the driving spray,
Washed by the seas and rudderless
She drifts on her fatal way.
Till a light-house lantern gleams through the fog,
And she reels from a mighty shock.
Then plunges and rolls as in mortal pain,
While the wind laughs loud at its sport again
And the mad waves wildly mock.

A rush of angry waters,
Rending the doomed wood,
Fierce struggles for life, vain prayers to save
From a death 'neath the ravening flood;
And spirits loosed from the storms of life
Like the passing of a dream.
Some wreckage cast from the ocean's breast
At the foot of the bare brown cliffs to rest
Where the lonely sea birds scream.